

Parwez Dewar's

# Jammu ♦ Kashmir ♦ Ladakh

Travel, trekking, culture, history, wildlife, <sup>almost</sup> everything



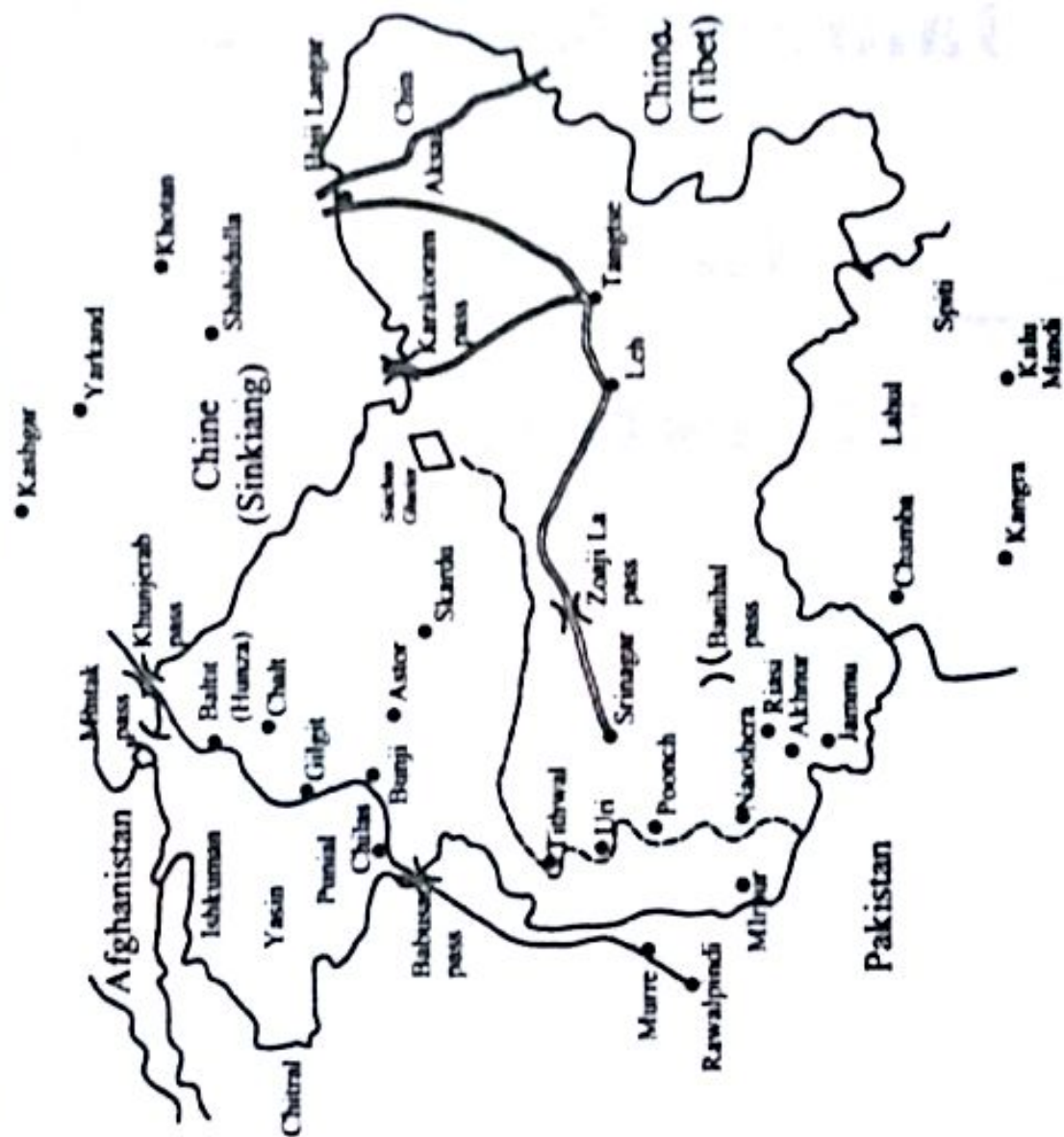


Parvéz Dewân's  
**Jammû, Kashmîr  
and  
Ladâkh**

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**Kashmîr**





Jammu & Kashmir (including Ladakh)



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**Jammû, Kashmîr  
and  
Ladâkh**

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**Kashmîr**

**Parvéz Dewân, IAS**

Govt. of Jammû and Kashmîr



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For

*Wg. Cdr. T.R. Dewan (Saleem)*

*Whose love for Kashmir exceeded even mine*

## Books by the author

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*Hiñdî-Urdû: A language Survival Kit* (Lonely Planet, Australia)

*The Civil Services* (20/20 Publications, Delhi)

*India's Western Himâlayas* (co-authored; APA, Singapore)

*The Hanûmân Châlisâ* (Viking-Penguin)

*The Names of Allâh* (Viking-Penguin)

*Jammû, Kashmîr & Ladâkh: Jammû* (Manas Publications)

*Jammû, Kashmîr & Ladâkh: Ladâkh* (Manas Publications)

### Cover illustrations:

*Front-and back-cover spread:* 'The old Tsrâr-é-Sharief (Budgâm)': A painting by Suman Gupta.h

*Back-cover inset:* 'Khânqâh-é-Mu'allâ, Srînagar' : A painting by Masood Hussain.

Both paintings are from the Raj Bhawan collection, Jammû and have been photographed by Shishu Pal.



## Preface

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It was the hotel owners of Jammû City who underlined the essential unity of Jammû, Kashmîr and Ladâkh.

For a while in the early 1990s tourists stopped visiting the Valley of Kashmîr. This threw tens of thousands of people out of work, because almost a tenth of the Valley's economy depends on tourism. The government decided to give Kashmîr's tourist trade (houseboats, *shikârâs* and taxis) a 'relief package' to help them tide over the crisis.

However, some hotel owners from Jammû City, almost three hundred kilometres away, asked the government to provide 'relief' to them as well.

At the time I was the Tourism Secretary of the state. I told Jammû's hotel-owners that their demand was totally unjustified. That's because in the early 1990s the number of pilgrim-tourists pouring into Jammû province grew by a record 20 per cent or so every year.

'But pilgrim tourism has only benefited Katra,' they argued. 'Katra is so close to Jammû that most pilgrims prefer to go straight to that holy town, rather than spend the night at Jammû.' (That's not altogether true. Jammû City's economy is booming because of these same pilgrims. But we will let that pass.)

Kashmîr, they pointed out, does not have any railway trains. Only around fourteen per cent of Kashmîr's tourists reach the Valley directly: i.e. by air. The other eighty-six per cent of tourists come to Jammû by train, bus or car, spend the night at Katra or Jammû and then proceed by road to Srinagar. Jammû's hotel-owners said that till 1989 they depended entirely on these 'transit-tourists' who were headed for Kashmîr. (This part is correct.)

In 1998, 1999 and 2003, when tourism revived in Kashmîr, the hotels of Jammû City started flourishing once again.



### **The essential unity of Jamm  , Kashm  r and Lad  kh**

Jamm  's hotels were not the only ones that lost out when tourists stopped going to Kashmir. Kargil's hotels simply collapsed. The decline in their occupancy was almost one hundred per cent. This district in Lad  kh has some of the world's highest mountains, the most exciting treks, the serene Suru valley and so much more. But it has no airport or railway line. It depends mostly on road travellers who pass through Kargil while journeying between Kashmir and Leh. (Kargil lies amid the two.)

Leh, on the other hand, *has* an airport. However, at least a third of its tourists want to do Leh only in combination with Srinagar. That's the proportion by which tourism in Leh dipped in the 1990s in response to the situation in distant Kashmir.

Jamm  's Dod   district suffered a fate similar to Kargil's. Like neighbouring Kargil it has very tall mountains and great treks. And like Kargil it also benefits from 'highway tourism.' When people stopped travelling between Jamm   and the Valley, the hotels and restaurants of Batote, Ramban, Banihal and places in between saw their business plummet.

By 1990 the holy shrine of Sri Mata Vaishno Devi ji (near Katra in Jamm  ) had become the state's biggest tourist attraction. Since then around eighty-six per cent of those who visit Kashmir have been people who came as pilgrims to Katra but decided to visit the Valley as well.

That's how much the three regions of the state depend on one another, how inextricably their economies-and destinies-are interlinked.

'But isn't that true of all neighbouring regions? Aren't the fortunes of all neighbours linked with one another?'

No. Himachal Pradesh and the Muzaffar  b  d area, too, are next to the state. But the tourism industries of the the Valley and Jamm   have never had similar bonds with these two regions, not even before 1947. Just as the tourism industries of India and Nepal are bound together in a way that those of India and P  kist  n (or India and Bangla Desh) have never been.

Tourism is just an illustration. The Leh-based pashm  n   (the wool used in 'cashmere') trade has influenced not just the economy but also the outward migration of Kashmiris for more than five hundred years now. In the Dogr   era a road was built specially to keep the pashmina trade within the state.

Above all, these three regions have ruled over one another the way other neighbouring areas have not.

In these three volumes about Jamm  , Kashm  r and Lad  kh (especially through their indexes) I have made a modest attempt to explore the depth of unity that has always existed between these three regions. And between



the people of the various communities that live in this land, which is at once fabled and, as of today, going through a bad patch.

### Shangri La

When Kashmir is called a paradise, or *Hūñzā* (in the occupied part of Ladākh) is likened to Shangri La, these are not the words of an excited copywriter on the payroll of J&K Tourism. They reflect the reality.

I started my career in Udhampur (Jammū) where the police officer training me said with alarm that the crime rate in the district had zoomed up. There had been a murder earlier that year. Considering that my native Delhi has more crime in a day than Udhampur district does in a year I could not understand why he was so worried. Now I do. The hills of Jammū (but not its plains) are generally free of most kinds of crime.

I then went to Zāṁskār (Ladākh) where not only was there no crime, there was no litigation either. In all my other field postings I would hold court twice a week and would decide on at least fifty disputes a month. In the year that I was in Zāṁskār only one case was filed in my court. The twenty-year old who cooked my food tried to take advantage of his proximity to me to get a spat with his wife resolved in his favour.

The same was true of Kargil. There were all of three lawyers in that huge district, which is bigger than many city-states. And they had very little work to do. To this day the rural people of Leh and Kargil do not lock their houses. To do so would offend their neighbours.

For centuries the huge Valley of Kashmir was virtually free of crime. Till 1989, wedding feasts would carry on till an hour or two after midnight. Women loaded with jewellery would then walk home without a male escort. That someone might molest them or steal their jewellery (in Delhi we call the latter 'chain snatching') was a thought that would not even enter their minds.

Today, thanks to arms that have come in from a neighbouring land—the macho rural elite of which land has for centuries strutted about with guns—things have changed, but only slightly. Kashmir still does not have pickpockets, a red light area, organised crime or armed thefts. In fact, take away militancy-related violence and Kashmir has hardly any crime at all.

### Carrying forward the Kashmīrī tradition of writing history

Kashmir has some of the oldest extant written histories in the world: certainly the oldest in the Indian sub-continent. And I don't mean just the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. *Rājatarāṅgīnī* or the fantasy-ridden, two-volume *Nilamat Purāṇ* (6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.).



After every one or two hundred years, along comes a historian who summarises all that has been written before him. That done, he updates the history of the Valley to the present. The last major history written about Kashmir was by Hassan Khoihami (died 1898).

Pt. Kalhan, Hassan and G.M.D. Sufi (1940s) did not confine themselves to recording the fortunes of kings. They wrote multi-volume books, with one volume normally devoted to the flora, fauna and geography of this fascinating land. An entire volume of Hassan's opus is about the Muslim saints of Kashmir.

The best known books about Kashmir are Kalhan's *Rājātaraṅginī* and Lawrence's *The Valley of Kashmir* (1895). The task that I have set myself is to bring up to date not these two monumental works but something much more humble. I have tried to summarise and update the various Gazetteers (especially the one published in 1890) as far as the towns and villages of Kashmir are concerned, Hassan, *Bahāristān-e Shāhī* and Dr. Sufi on history and handicrafts and Bakaya (1973) on trekking.

I would have been quite happy if a quarter of this book had consisted of original, unpublished material. However, I feel that in the event at least a third, maybe even forty per cent, of this book is made up of fresh materials and analyses.

Ideally, there should be no errors in a book. I have tried to countercheck each fact. However, sometimes, despite the best efforts, I might have made a mistake or two. In order to involve readers in these efforts I gave parts of the manuscript to the two leading newspapers of the state, *Greater Kashmir* and the *Daily Excelsior*, as well as a journal, *New Hope*, to serialise. I had hoped that alert readers would point out mistakes.

Only one reader did so. Unfortunately, he assumed that I had deliberately distorted certain population figures about pre-1947 Jammû. I cross-checked, found that he was right and corrected the mistake in the final draft of this book.

To minimise biases, the chapters about districts and religions have been arranged in the alphabetical order. (Pahalgām and Gulmarg are parts of Ānaṭnāg and Bārāmullā districts respectively.)

What I have not been able to do is to standardise the spellings of South Asian words. That is because, as you can imagine, the floppies of this huge book were submitted in instalments. As a result the same name (especially if it ends in a -pora, -pore or -pur) might be spelt differently at different places. The same name might appear with diacritical marks at one place and without them at another. Half a name might have diacritical marks while the other half might not. I hope the reader will bear with me on this.



**‘But why is such a record necessary?’**

Since the British writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, English-language books on Kashmir have been written for two kinds of readers: the serious traveller who wants to know more about Kashmir; and introspective Kashmiris. I have tried to address both.

Most of my friends are Kashmiri college students who have grown up in the 1990s. Few of them have ever been to downtown Srinagar. They often ask me to take them there and show them mediæval Kashmiri monuments. They want to know more about their culture and ancestors and keep asking me about them.

Among the Kashmiri Pandits a whole generation of college students has grown up outside Kashmir. They, too, often ask me about their heritage.

Secondly, I had to write this book because there's so much disinformation going around. In the 1990s, a number of books were written (and websites hosted) highlighting the few conflicts that had taken place in the past. Therefore, someone had to write about the enormous amount of love that always existed among the various communities.

The war between the Chaks and the Mughals is often portrayed as a Shi'a vs. Sunni discord. Never mind that Akbar and Yusuf Shah Chak were friends till ambition tore them apart. Or that the Chaks' mothers and brothers-in-law were often Sunnis (when they weren't Hindûs).

G.M.D. Sufi's *Kashir* is my favourite book on Kashmir. The breadth of his scholarship is stunning. And yet few Kashmiris have even heard of it, because some agitated Sikhs obtained a court injunction, which kept *Kashir* out of the bookshops for almost two decades. The Sikhs were understandably pained by lines like these, 'This quarter of a century [when Sikhs ruled over Kashmir] is the darkest period in the history of Kashmir... Despite my efforts to obtain information from several Sikh sources, I have not learnt of any achievement of a positive character to be set to the credit of Sikh rule in Kashmir [except for some small forts and gardens, rebuilt bridges and drought relief works].' (page 750)

I repeat: I admire *Kashir* more than any other English language book on Kashmir (including Lawrence's). But obviously Dr. Sufi did not look hard enough. In fact, he doesn't even seem to have tried.

Many educated people, within Kashmir and outside, Muslim as well as Hindû and Buddhist, believe that for a while all of Kashmir (and much of India) had converted from Hindûism to Buddhism, till the Shankaracharya came along and converted everyone back to Hindûism.



The evidence does not suggest a Hiñdû-Buddhist conflict at all. Instead, throughout *The Rājātaraṅginī*, and beyond, we find Hiñdûs getting Buddhist *vihārs* constructed and Buddhists installing Hiñdû idols. This is true, to this day, of the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, Thailand and Cambodia.

Outside Kashmir there is so much talk about the forcible conversion of Hiñdûs to Islām. The sins of a single new convert, Suhābhāt, are sought to be visited on an entire community.

Finally, the extended Kashmīrī diaspora, Muslim as well as Pandit, recent migrants as well as those whose ancestors had left Kashmīr in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D., might find parts of this book useful in tracing their roots.

### **Stereotypes about the three regions**

India's northernmost state is generally said to consist of three regions: Muslim Kashmīr, Hindu Jammû and Buddhist Ladākh. But this isn't even factually correct. Almost a third of Jammû is Muslim and three of its six districts have Muslim majorities. Before 1947, the Muslims were in a majority in the entire province. Even in Ladākh, almost half the population is Muslim. Within Kashmīr there are entire pockets where the Muslims speak Pahārī or Gojri or even Pushto at home.

The other popular stereotype about the three regions is in terms of topography: the hot plains of Jammû, the mountains of Kashmīr and the arctic deserts of Ladākh. Again a bit too simplistic. Only one of Jammû's six districts-Jammû proper-does not receive snowfall. Kishtwār, in Jammû province, has some of the tallest mountains in the world. Even Jammû town is built on the slopes of a hill.

On the other hand much of Kashmīr Valley is flat. In fact, that is what makes it unique in the world. Nowhere else is there such a vast expanse of flat land at a height of more than 5,000' above the sea.

And not all of Ladākh is either a desert or arctic.

A humble attempt has thus been made to explain the rich variety of this exciting State.

Parvéz Dewân



## Pronunciation

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This book has used diacritical marks to double the value of three vowels:  
a, i and u.

'a' is as in 'cathedral'

'â' is as in 'fâther'

'ao' = 'a' + 'o', much as in 'cow'

'e' is as in 'get'

'é' is as in 'café'

'i' is as in 'it'

'î' is as in 'eat'

'ñ' is a brief, almost silent 'n,' much as in 'monk.'

'o' is always as in 'go'

'u' is as in 'put'

'û' is as in 'food'

## Acknowledgements and Credits

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### Credits

*Photographs:* Mohd. Ashraf, IAS, and his team at J&K Tourism, led by Amar Singh, obtained colour slides from the department's archives. These pictures had been taken by some of India's best-known professional photographers, on behalf of the Tourism department. Had their names been available, I would have gladly mentioned them.

Shishu Pal photographed paintings, by Suman Gupta and Masood Hussain, from the Raj Bhawan collection. (I had, in the mid-1990s, the honour of commissioning these paintings on behalf of His Excellency Gen. K.V. Krishna Rao, the then Governor of Jammū and Kashmir, whose Principal Secretary I then was.)

*Maps:* Tufail Ahmed Bhat and his colleagues at Autocadd Centre, Jawahar Nagar, Srinagar, prepared all the maps that have been used in this book.

*Cover notes:* Renuka Narayanan is not responsible for them. Or isn't she? I mean it is she who believes that I send people to sleep on Kashmir. It is she who insisted on telling everyone about my 'trawling' footloose through Nicaragua and Cambodia. And about the splinters of bombs that have whizzed past me, all because I have a slightly burnt tweed jacket to show for one of those bomb attacks. I wish she had kept these things secret. Especially my boring people to sleep with factoids about the State of my adoption. And my passionate involvement with it.

No, seriously, Renuka wrote the notes. It's just that we retained some parts that she had excised. (Renuka is an editor of the Indian Express.)



### Acknowledgements

A number of my friends and colleagues helped me with materials relevant to this book.

Thanks to Feroz Ahmed, IAS, and his team at the Census Department I have been able to bring a number of population-related figures up to date. Mian Javed Husein, IFS, Regional Wildlife Warden, not only gave me notes about wildlife, he also proofread the pages about the birds of Dachigam.

Habibullah Mir and his team at KHARA (Kashmir Hotel and Restaurant Association) helped me redo several pages of the 'Appendix.' TD Sain, DySP, JK Police, and Col. Harpreet Nagra gave me details about the present and old routes to the holy cave of Srî Amarnâth jî.

Thanks to Asghar Samoon, IAS, I was able to add depth to the section on Guréz, a place which both of us love and respect. M. Asaf Mahmud gave me all kinds of information sheets, which he had collected over a lifetime, about mountains, rivers and trekking routes.

In my exploration of Bandipura's alleged Jewish connection I sought the help of Mohd. Afzal Bhat, Director Land Records (to trace out the oldest available record), Surjeet Singh Bali, Tehsildar, Bandipura and Abdul Ahad Mir, Sadar Qanungo.

Shailendra Kumar, IAS, got me details about Ânañtnâg's supposed Jewish past.

I am also grateful to M.K. Ajatshatru Singh for lending me an old book from his illustrious father's library, a book that has lent enormous depth to the section on Trekking.

Amrit Brar very kindly scanned the manuscript, indeed all three mss in this series. Mr. Mohd. Amin, the then Director, Floriculture, corrected the entire Kashmir volume.

Naved Masood, IAS, Saleem Beig, K. Rajendra Kumar, IPS Prof. Neeraj Mattoo and Avinash Mohananey, IPS, only had to suffer individual chapters, which they then advised me on how to improve. Mr. Beig told me stories that no one else could have.

Sudhîr Vyâs, IFS, gave me perceptive new insights.

A number of other colleagues, especially Ghulam Rasool Bhat, Head Maulvi of the government's Persian Archives, and Mr. Ghulam Jeelani Nahvi, IAS (Retd.) gave me interesting insights, all of which I have used.

Mr Justice Mir told me several relatively unknown things about Dhambâli, Zool and Bâbâ Nasib ud Din.

I have a strict rule about not using my office staff for my personal work. Yet my personal assistants Virendra Gupta, Ramesh Kaul and Abdul Rehman got me bus schedules and lists of hotels, which I have used in the appendix.



Muhammad Maqbool Sofi would, from time to time, print the drafts. I would often engage Jamaal Sâheb, my driver, and Rafiq, my boy-Friday, in conversations on aspects that I needed information about.

And Asif Siddiqie of the NIC was always around to help whenever I had problems with the Internet, which was all too often.

#### **Acknowledgements of a different kind**

When Mr. Mohd. Amin Bhat read the first draft of this book, he noticed that there were several references in it to my work as the Tourism and Floriculture Commissioner of the state. It was while talking to him that I realised that 'my work' wasn't mine alone. So many other people, both senior and junior to me, had contributed. I would be failing my duty if I did not duly acknowledge these contributions.

Amin Sâheb, for instance, was the Director, Floriculture, the highest-ranking field-('line-') officer of the department. It was because of him and his team that I was able to achieve my dream of renovating parts of the Mughal gardens of Srinagar (Nishat and Shalimar) and Achâbal. The important thing is that in our restoration work we used exactly the same materials as the Mughals had. Our proudest achievement was the restoration of a Mughal pavilion in Srinagar that few had even known the existence of. At the Mughal garden of Bijbehârâ, we installed a major pump to draw water from the Jehlum for the fountains and water channels.

So, did Amin Sâheb do me a favour by merely doing what he was paid to? Yes, he did. One of his predecessors, given the same brief and the same amount of funds, thought that the best way to restore the Mughal gardens was to buy scores of ugly benches from a favourite contractor (and store them in a warehouse because there's no way one can install benches in a Mughal garden).

Above all, Amin Sâheb helped me create a garden that I was and am obsessed with: the Bâgh é Shagûfâ ('the garden of blossoms'). This is a garden where we plan to plant every single flowering tree of Kashmîr. The idea for such a garden was born during a conversation with Mr. Mohd. Ashraf, the Director General, Tourism, and the highest field ('line') officer on the Tourism side. I have never been to Tokyo. Mr. Ashraf, a very widely travelled person, told me about its cherry blossoms. I argued that Kashmîr has not just cherry blossoms but around a dozen other blossoming trees as well. We had to do something like Tokyo in Kashmîr, which has its own traditions of almond blossoms.

In the summer of 2000, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, the then Chief Minister of the state, expressed his unhappiness about the rundown state of the Son Lañk island of the Dal Lake (better known as Châr Chinâr). We used the funds that he allotted us to restore the island close to its original size.



The same day Dr. Abdullah took us to a cesspool just before the Nishât Garden on the main road (the Boulevard). Wastewater and garbage from the residential colonies uphill would collect on it. Amin Sâheb and I converted it into the tiny triangular park that you can now see.

Dr. Abdullah, in a speech at its inauguration, credited the café-cum-boat shed on Srinagar's Nehru Park island to me. However, the idea was born when Dr. Abdullah told me that its predecessor was unsafe and likely to collapse any day, endangering human lives in the process.

The engineers of the Floriculture department helped me realise another dream. We created a little lake in the (Nehru Memorial) Botanical Gardens with very little money. It was Mr. Jalil Ahmed Khân, the Finance Secretary of the state, who gave our department Rs.21 lakh over and above our normal budget because he knew of my obsession with the project.

The festivals that we adopted at Aish Muqâm (zool) and Bîjbehârâ (dhamâl) are generally credited to me. However, I first heard about them from Mr. Shah, the Financial Adviser to the Tourism Department.

Today the revival of the Baisakhi Festival is associated with me. However, the idea was born during a discussion with Lt. Gen. Patankar. That such a festival had once existed is something that I learnt while researching for the 'Festivals' chapter of this book.

I have acknowledged elsewhere in this book the help that I received in my discovery of the Kashmir school of miniature painting. I would like to place on record that Mr. B.R. Singh, then the Secretary to the Chief Minister, offered me all the funds required to revive the art. Unfortunately, I couldn't find people with the right skills to man the project.

Some ideas force themselves on you. Mr. Ashraf, an officer of the highest integrity, and I were extremely disturbed by the amount of funds that the inner road at Gulmarg would gobble up by way of repairs every year. We decided to make a road that did not need frequent repairs. Mr. Ashraf got a laboratory to examine the soil at Gulmarg. We came to the conclusion that if we were to spend an unorthodox amount of funds on the road, and triple reinforce it, it would work out cheaper in the long run. Since there were no takers for our theory, we decided to stop all other works in Kashmir and concentrate on just this one for a year and a half. So far we have been vindicated.

Mr. M.A. Nowshahri, one of our finest Chief Engineers, not only did the Gulmarg road, he has also given life to so many of my other dreams as well. As the executive head of the Sri Amarnâth jî Shrine Board I had set myself the very tough target of widening the Bâltal route to the holy cave of Sri Amarnâth jî. Mr. Nowshahri has virtually doubled it for us.



I always wanted to put circular blue plaques on the heritage buildings of Srinagar. Mr. Nowshahri made this happen. His team and he also created mounds and cast-iron benches near the Boulevard just before the Royal Springs Golf Course. This was a project that Shahala Sheikh and I had been pursuing for some time.

However, the blame for the stones on the Boulevard pavement is mine alone. Dr. Abdullah had wanted tiles on the stretch from Dal Gate to the Nehru Park. I pleaded for stone paving instead. He very kindly agreed. Since the department couldn't afford expensive devri stones, we settled for the next best: rough, slate-like Baramulla stones. The advantage of Baramulla stones is that grass can grow between them. The disadvantage is that they are too rough for high-heels to walk on. And, as has happened, instead of grass, mud has started accumulating between the stones.

If you live in one of the Indian metros or in an affluent country, you might consider signboards with white letters on a blue background no great shakes. I brought this concept from Europe to Kashmir in the early 1990s. I don't think even Delhi had such signages then, especially large overhead signboards on highways. It took us seven years to refine our fonts and get the exact shade of blue, but Mr. Bulbul, Mr. Raza and their team finally helped me do it.

I was able to clean up a 1km. by 1km. square portion of the Anchar Lake at a cost of just Rs.1.5lakh (US \$3,000) because of Dr.Kundangar and the engineers of the Lakes Authority.

Tariq Fazili is a talented architect. He helped me create a Kashmiri ziarat (shrine) at Suraj Kund, near Delhi. This timber, stone, papier mâché and khatamband masterpiece has real cut-glass chandeliers. If you want to see genuine, heritage, Kashmiri-Lûristâni architecture but can't come to Kashmir, Suraj Kund is the place to go to. Tariq designed the new Nehru Park building and Shahala oversaw the construction at every stage. Except for the arch at the top of the centre, it is every bit what I wanted. (For the record: Shahala and Dilshad Sheikh have helped us purely for the love of Kashmir.)

Shahala also helped conceive the idea of widening the Lal Ded road, even though her idea was slightly different from what Mr. Nowshahri and I have done. We took our plans to the Chief Minister, Mr. Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, who granted us funds for the widening of this as well as three other city roads: Ikhrajpora, Berber Shah and the Jâmâ Masjid road.

Mr. Sayeed also got us to landscape the airport road. He has set us the task of creating parks in downtown Srinagar.



Mr. Sayeed then gave us another extremely satisfying project—the beautification of the environs of Srinagar's Khânqâh é Mu'allâ. I am also trying to restore the Jâmâ Masjid. I am grateful to Mr. Shawl and the Circular Road team for their help in this historic task.

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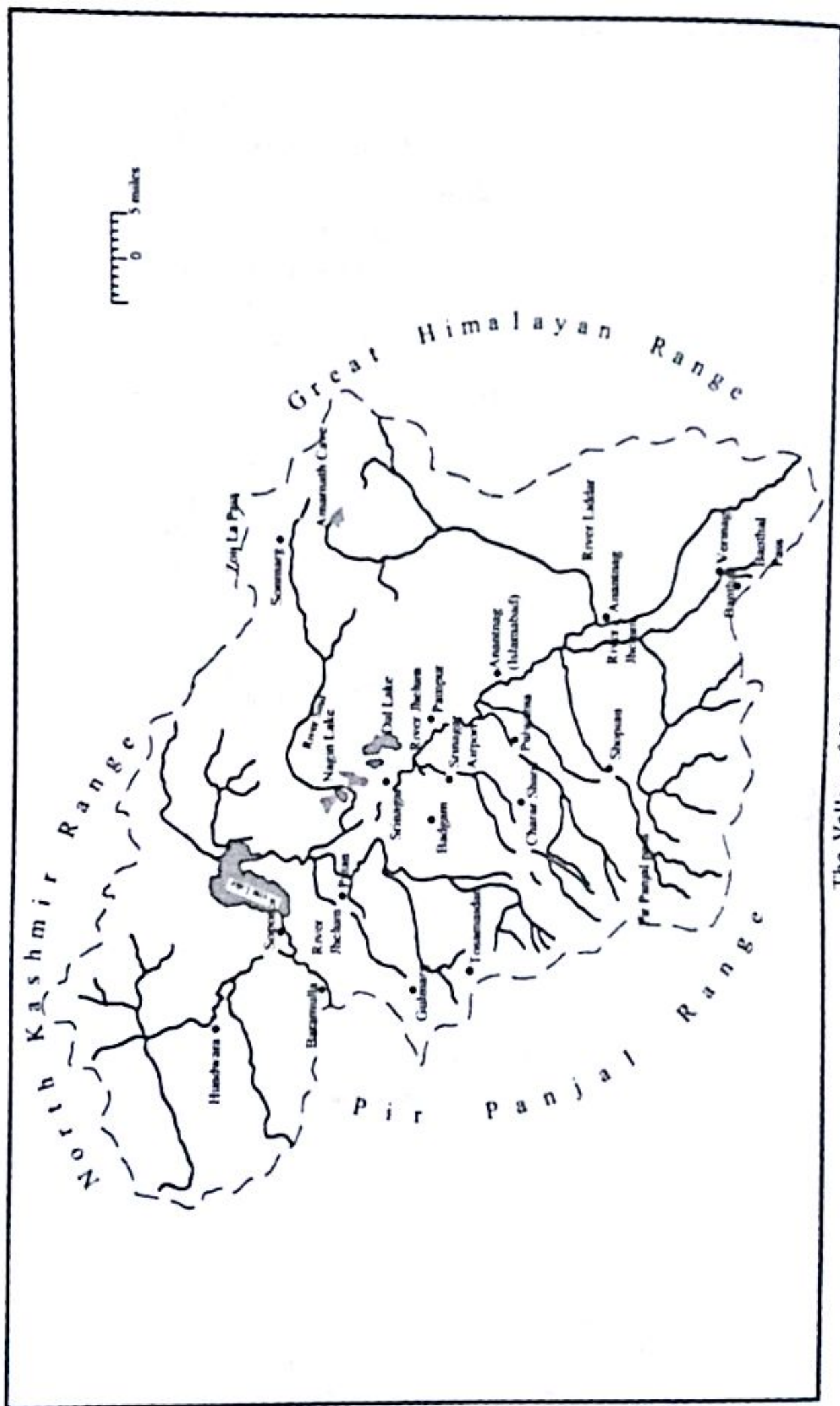
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# History





The Valley of Kashmir



Baramullah: The golden hues of autumn



The Mughal gardens of Kashmir often have trees at the extremes





*Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh : A painting by Suman Gupta*  
Featured are the Thiksey Gompa (Ladakh), the old Tsrar e Sharief (Kashmir)  
and the Raghunath Temple (Jammu)



The Nishat Garden, Srinagar



Water skiing on the Dal Lake





Fishing on the Lidder



Tabaq Mâz on a Trâmi in a wâzwân





Houseboats on the backwaters of the Dal Lake



A waterfall in South Kashmir





The Jamâ Masjid of Srinagar





Autumn on the Gulmarg road



The Verinâg spring





In the newly discovered cave temple of Lord Shiv:  
(L - R) Haji Rafique Bocken, the Bakerwāl who provided the first clue;  
Vivek Garg, publisher; Pervéz Dewān author and  
Abdul Ahad Sheikh, numberdār of Phirisilan



Ten ancient man-made, rock Shiv lingams have been painted saffron  
by personnel of a uniformed force. At the extreme right is a man-made  
bust of Lord Shiv, with a topknot (*jatā*) on his head and a cobra hood  
above the shoulder. One perfectly rounded Shiv ling (left, foreground)  
has mercifully escaped the saffron paint



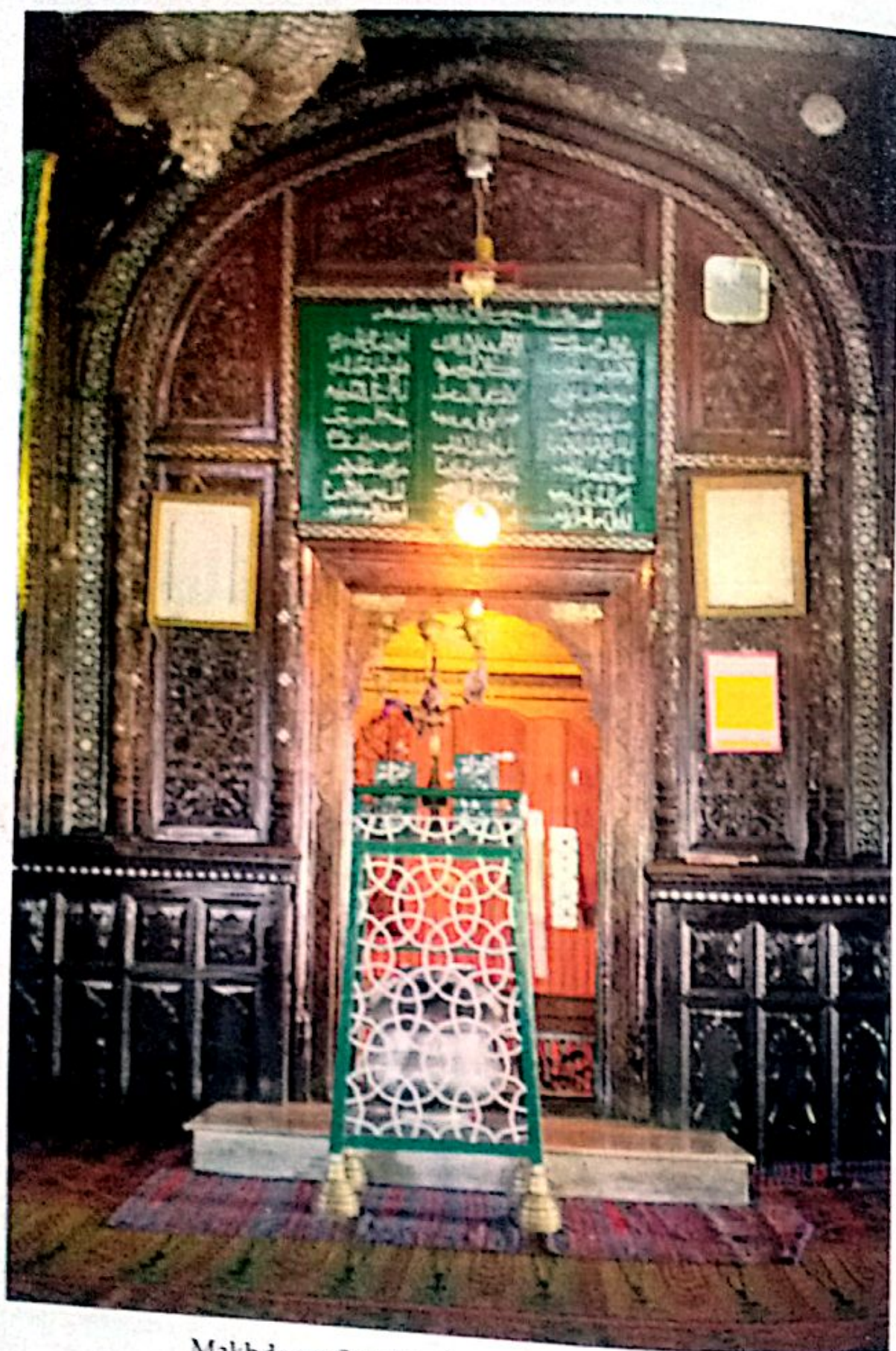


Some handicrafts of Kashmîr



Some Kashmîrî fruits





Makhdoom Saheb's shrine: An inner view





The Thâjawâs glacier near Sonamarg





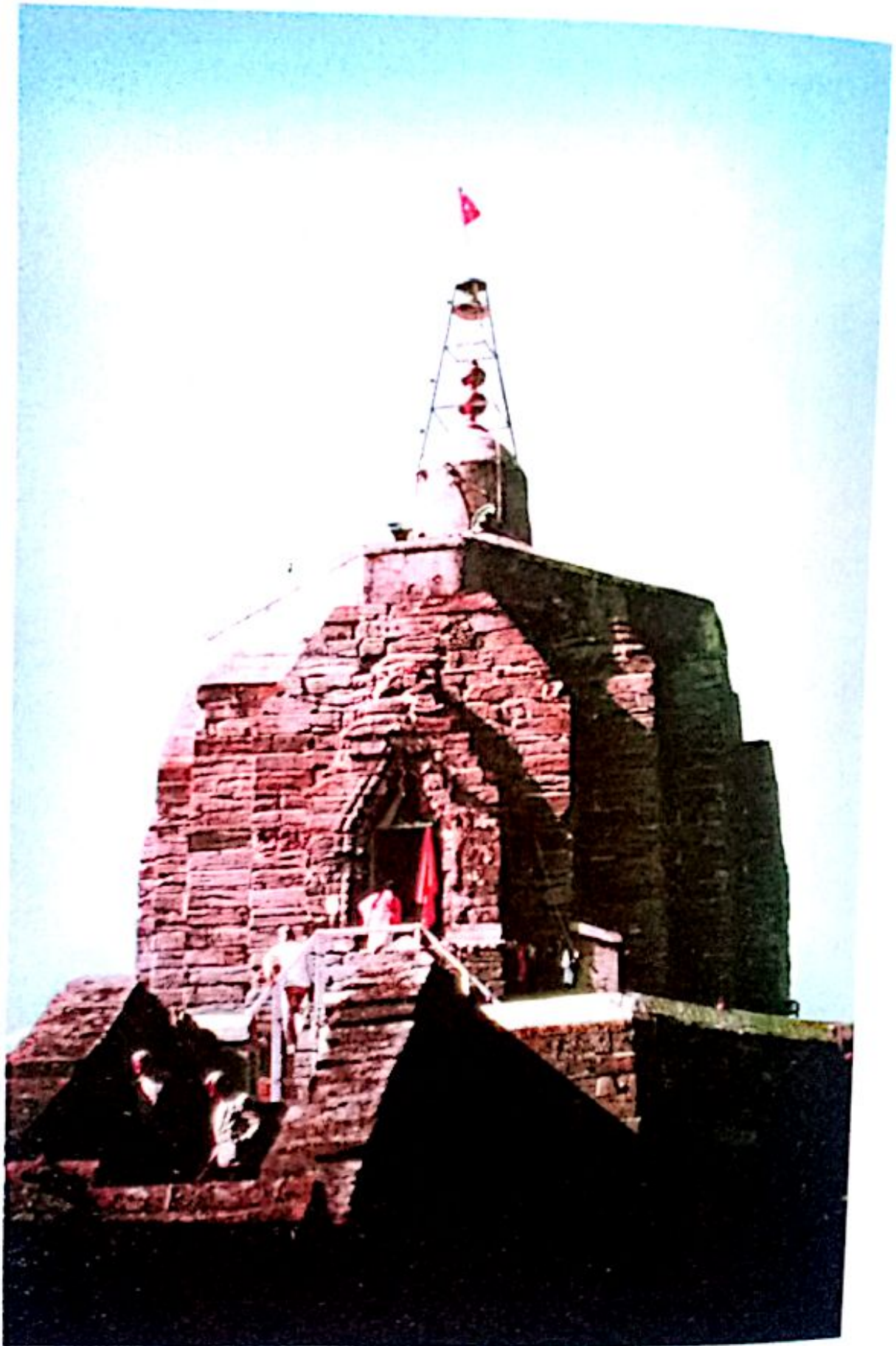
The Hazratbal shrine, Srinagar





Dastgir Saheb's shrine: An inner view





The Shankarâcharya temple





Saffron fields at Pampore

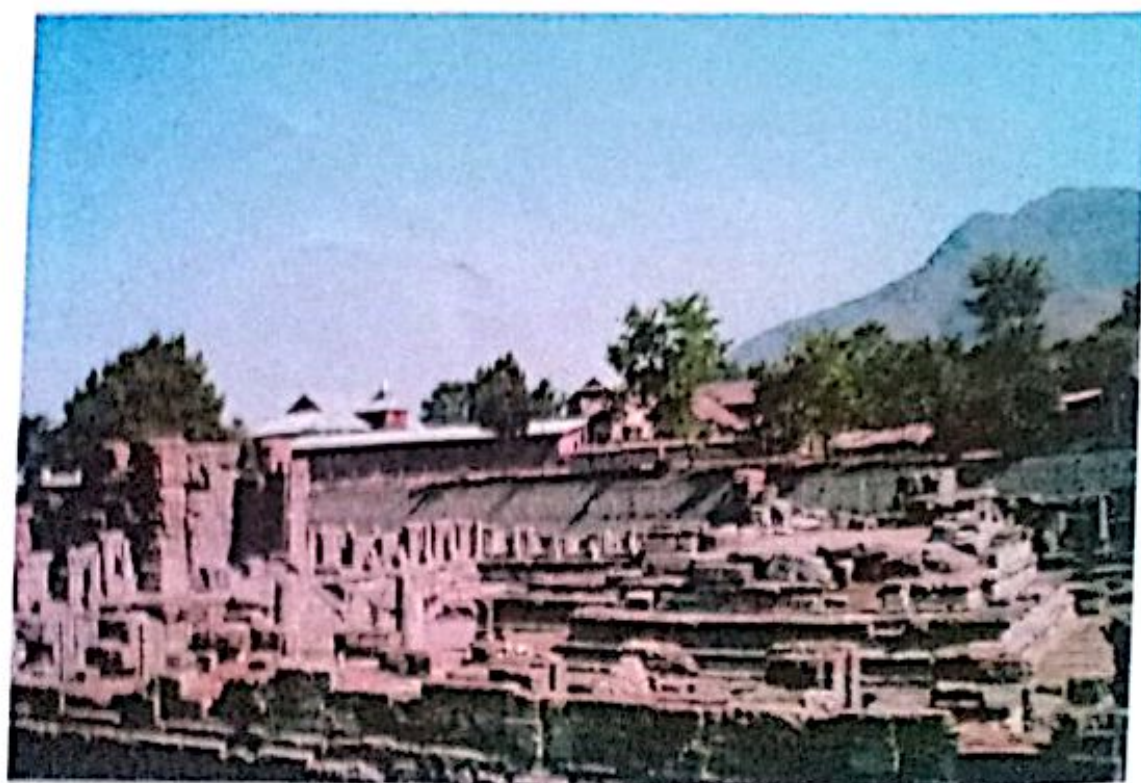


Kashmiri architecture: houses with wooden *dabs* (balconies)  
on the Jhelum riverfront, Srinagar



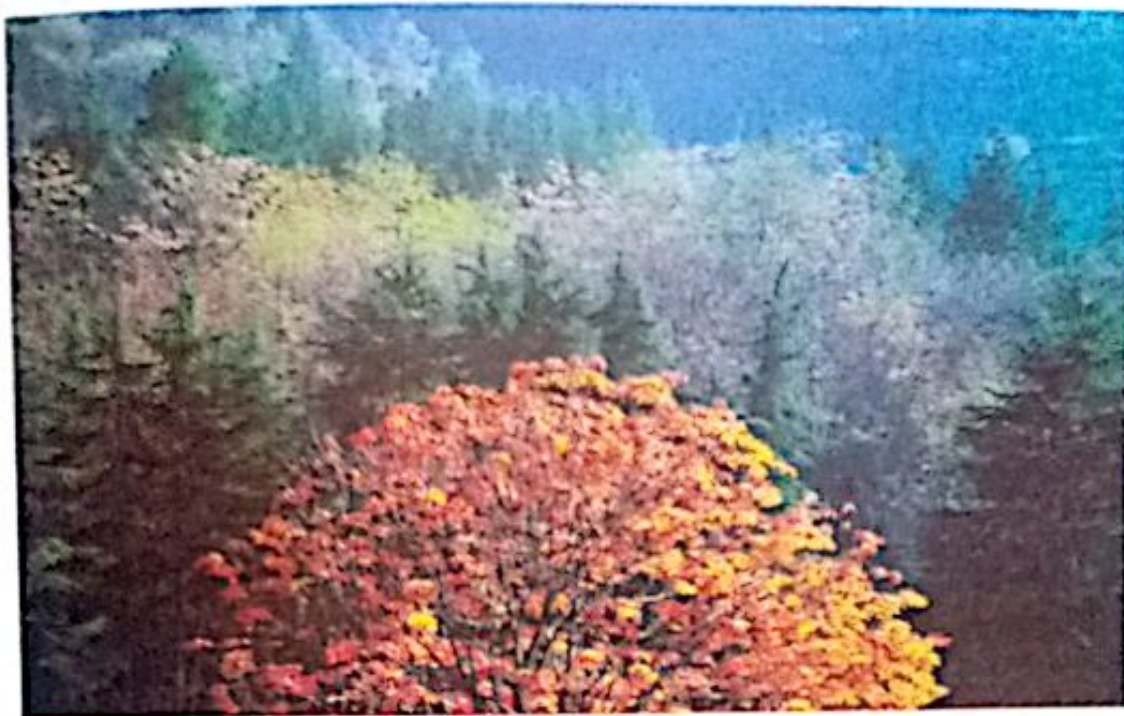


Sledging at Gulmarg

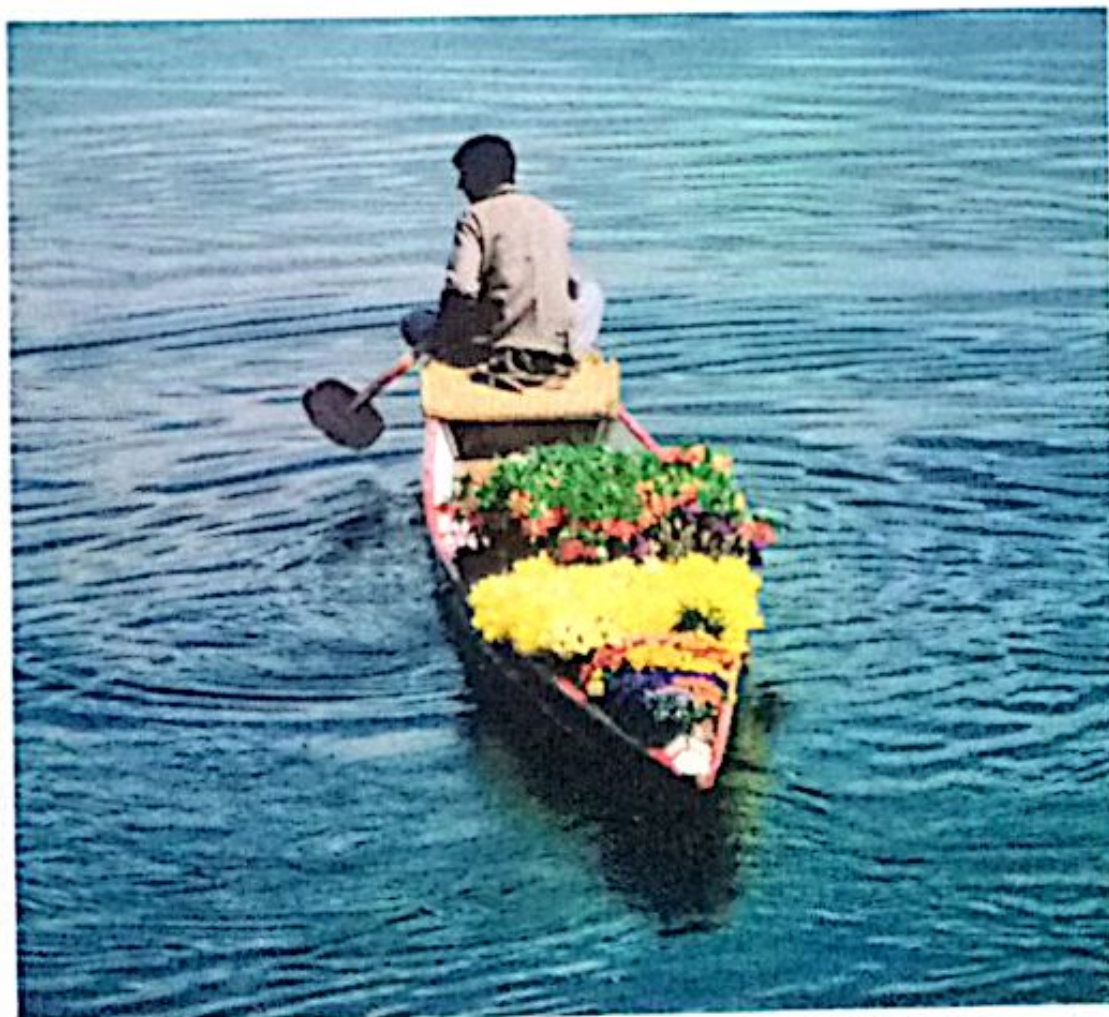


The ruins of Awantiporâ





The forests of Wangat in autumn



A flower seller on the Dal Lake





Fish in white water



Sonamarg



Wood carving



The Gulmarg gondola (cable car)



# 1

## A History of Kashmîr

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### The Origins of the Land/Legends

It is believed that Kashmîr used to be a huge lake—an inland sea, actually-called the *Kashyap Sar*. This was before human beings began to live in what is now the Valley of Kashmîr. However, it is assumed, and with good reason, that there were humans—certainly some hermits—living in what now are the mountains of Kashmîr. These, then, were the banks of this gigantic lake.

The plains of present day Kashmîr are on the bed of this lake. We will see in the chapter on 'Bârâmulâ' how the lake was drained and dry land emerged. In the volume on Ladâkh we shall come across a claim that the first humans to settle in Kashmîr were from Kargil.

Apparently, a saint called Kashyap was travelling northward on a pilgrimage from South India. When he reached Jalandhar he was told that the gigantic lake of Satisar had been overrun by demons.

The Goddess Shârikâ arrived at this stage. She was an enormous bird. Shârikâ ji had a divine stone in her mouth. Two of the demons were still inside Lake Satisar. They were terrorising the hermits. Goddess Shârikâ threw that gigantic stone on the demons and killed them.<sup>1</sup> The stone converted itself into the hillock that has been called the *Hari Parbat* ever since. (Parbat means 'hill'. 'Hari' is derived from the Kashmîrî 'herr' which means 'bird', and not from the Hindi 'Hari', which means 'God'.)

Later, God is said to have sent His angels over to Kashmîr. This story I can vouch for because I have met several of their descendants in the Valley. These 'Bekdarat' scattered about seeds of many kinds to dry the soil. The seeds later grew into the incredible variety of vegetation that we find in the Valley today.

<sup>1</sup> The legend has been recorded in *Shârikâ Mahâtmya*, an ancient, pan-Indian Sanskrit text.



Geological evidence—especially rocks and alluvial deposits—indicates that Kashmir might indeed have been a lake. The 'great prehistoric lake' theory has been mentioned by almost all Kashmiri historians, Hindu as well as Muslim, ancient as well as mediæval. However, the theory has learned critics like R.D. Oldham who, in 1903, rejected it after a study of the 'karewas' (plateaux) and lakes of Kashmir.

Today, the plains of the Valley of Kashmir are mostly at an altitude of around 5,500 feet. According to geologists the Valley used to be a thousand feet higher still. That is when these plains (correctly 'the basin') were covered with alluvial deposits, which were made up of the wastes that had come down from the surrounding mountains. However, the Jehlum carried most of this alluvium down to the Punjab. Those who perform the Amarnâth Yatra will see mounds of alluvium waiting to be washed into the river by the rains.

Where is the name Kashmir derived from? No one is too sure. We do know that it was called *Satisaras* before it got its present name. One theory is that the 'kash' of Kashmir comes from the aforementioned *Kashyap Rishi*. Another is that in the ancient Prakrit language 'kas' means 'channel' and 'mir' 'mountain'.

Since the late 19th century there have been revisionist histories which say that the Kashmiris were all Jews—one of the lost tribes, in fact. (See 'The people of Kashmir.') Theorists wrote these histories before the Jews became the designated enemy no.1.

## Before the Christian era

### Pre-history

*The Palaeolithic Age* (Old Stone Age): Human industry is likely to have begun in Kashmir before anywhere else in Asia. A hand axe and a large flake have been excavated from the Lidder valley in the Pahalgâm area. These date to the second glacial and second inter-glacial ages. The Lidder valley has also yielded implements from the middle Pleistocene Age. Stone tools have been excavated from Glandhar (Galandar, near Srinagar).

Tools from the Palaeolithic Age have been discovered at Somber in large quantities. They have also been found at Bhatchak, Huin, Kalladur (near Pattan) and Tapriballa (Bâramullâ district), Khân Sâheb and Hab Shah Sahib (Budgâm district) and Balapur (Shopian tehsil). Somber is 18 km. south east of Srinagar and is close to Pâmpore. So is Galandar.

Fossils of elephants have been found at Somber, Glandhar/ Galandar and near the shrine of Bâbâ Rafi-ud-Din in Budgâm. The fossil at Glandhar/ Galandar is estimated to be fifty thousand years old.



*The Neolithic Age:* The most exciting and best-known site, of course, is Burzahom (Burzahama), just outside Srinagar city. (See 'Srinagar district'.) The Gufkral site (see 'Pulwâmâ') is older still. Pottery and stone tools have also been found at Kalladur and Shaphandur (near Pâmpore).

P.C. Chaudhari writes, 'Chronologically, ceramic of Kashmîr neolithic is older than 2200 B.C. and there was a contact between Kashmîr neolithic and Harappan culture which was flourishing in the Indus valley which is evident from copper objects, steatite beads and painted pot found from Kashmîr.'

*The Megalithic Age:* Menhirs have been found at Burzahom as well as Gufkral. The Gazetteer of India: Kashmîr region (1999) says, '... it is claimed that Neolithic culture of Kashmîr with its hunting-based economy has close affinity with west China and Central Asia. However, the discovery of copper pins and a few camilian beads from Gufkral and certain artifacts from Burzahom establish that trade relations existed between Kashmîr and Harappan settlers.'

G.E.L. Carter of the (British) Indian Civil Service was one of the first to establish that there had been a Stone Age in Kashmîr. He listed 'Nâran Nag' as one of the sites where artefacts from the Stone Age had been found. The other Stone Age sites mentioned by him were Pandrethan, Vendrahom, Rangyil, Arhom and the Takht-e-Suleiman. These implements included a tomahawk, mono—and megaliths and tumuli. (Note of caution: There is a Nârâ Nâg, also known as Narain Nag, in Budgâm. On the other hand, the Nârâ Nâg at Wangat, Srinagar district, is a more likely candidate because it has other ancient ruins as well.)

### **The Kashmîrî tradition of writing history**

If you look at the history of Kashmîr from the point of view of Kargil (Ladâkh), then the great lakes got drained no earlier than 180 B.C.—and maybe as recently as the ninth or tenth centuries A.D. This is impossible to accept because from 1184 B.C. onwards we have precise details of which king reigned for how many years and months and, sometimes, even days. Dates are missing only for the period before that. By and large we know the names of the kings who ruled Kashmîr—and the order in which they did so.

Kashmîr has an incredibly good tradition of recording history. In A.D. 1148, Kalhan began recording a multi-volume history of the period that had gone before him. He did so with a sophistication and accuracy that inspires awe even today. And he was hardly writing from his imagination—or even from folk-tales and oral traditions. There certainly had been several written works of history before him, of which the two-volume encyclopaedia, the



*Nilamat Puran* is still available. It dates at least to the 6th or 7th century A.D, if not before.

Jonaraja updated the history to A.D. 1459. Srivar took it to 1486. Malik Haidar Chadoora and the anonymous author of the *Baharistan-e-Shahi* covered the early 17th century in detail. Khwaja Azam Dedmari's *W  qey  t-e-Kashmir* brought us upto 1747. Syed Ali, Birbal Kachroo (who wrote around 1835), aristocratic diarists and Hassan Khoihami (died 1898) took this very scientific tradition forward.

'Scientific', because (except in the *Nilamat Puran*) there is very little mumbo-jumbo, mythology or anything that is obviously difficult to believe. Also because there is a wealth of detail in these histories. The *Baharistan-e-Shahi*, for instance, gives precise names of conspirators, the dates on which they met and where. Hassan measured the length and breadth of the Idgah of Srinagar in strides. Beginning with the *Nilamat Puran*, all these histories give us details about the flowers, lakes and towns of Kashmir. That's the kind of accuracy we are looking at.

By bringing the history to 2003, I am attempting to become another link in this chain.

## Kashmir: The Dynasties

A Kashmiri friend once asked me, 'Was Kashmir ruled by one, long, unbroken Hindu dynasty, to be followed by one Muslim dynasty, or were there several different dynasties?' For the benefit of readers who have the same question, here is a summing up:

- King Gonanda I ruled 20 years before the Mahabharata war.
- The Pandu dynasty ruled from an unknown date to the 3rd century B.C.
- The Mauryas: 3rd century B.C. to the beginning of the Christian era.
- The Kushans: till A.D. 178.
- The Gonanda dynasty: till the 5th century A.D.
- The White Huns: till A.D. 627.
- The K  rkota dynasty: till A.D. 948 (after that for two years Kashmir was ruled by kings who belonged to no particular dynasty).
- The first Lohara dynasty: till 1101.
- The second Lohara dynasty: till 1339.
- The Sultans (mostly the Shahr  m  r   dynasty): 1346-1541 and 1551-1561 (with some interruptions).



- Mirza Haidar Dughlat: 1541-1551.
- The Chak dynasty: 1561-1589 (with interruptions and overlapping).
- The Mughals: 1586-1752
- The Afghans: 1752-1819
- The Sikhs: 1819-1846
- The Dogrās: 1846-1947
- Elected rulers: 1947-the present (except parts of 1977, 1986-87 and 1990-96, when the state was ruled by governors appointed by the President of India).

### **2500 B.C: The earliest known king**

It can safely be assumed from the available chronology that Gonanda I, the earliest known king of Kashmir, ruled around 2,500 B.C. Kalhan tells us that Gonanda I assumed power twenty years before the Mahabharata war. He was on the side of the Kauravas, being a relative of Jarasandha of Magadha. Among his dateless successors we have the names of kings like Lava, Kusha and Ashoka—perhaps the Great Ashoka himself. (He is dated to 272-231 B.C.). We know that Kashmiri kings were related to those of Magadha.

From 1184 B.C, when Gonanda III took over, dates start getting more accurate. (The Kashmiris used the Laukik and Kali Samvat calendars.) The Gonanda dynasty ruled for 1,014 years, 9 months and 9 days (I warned you about the precision), i.e. till 217 B.C. It was replaced by the Vikramaditya dynasty in 169 B.C, only to stage a comeback 192 years later, in A.D. 24.

### **A.D. 24 to 1338: The second phase of the ancient period**

#### **Christ in Kashmir**

Did Jesus Christ ever come to Kashmir? Is he the prophet known in Kashmir as Youza Asaph and buried at Rozabal, in the heart of Srinagar? See 'Christ in Kashmir' for details.

#### **Ancient Kings**

The Kushans were a Turkish people. They assumed power in parts of South Asia around the beginning of the Christian era. The Buddhist Kanishka (A.D. 78) annexed Kashmir. He erected several monuments and founded a town that is now known as Kanispor (i.e. Kanishkapur) near Bâramullâ town. He got the Third Buddhist Council held near Harwan (a suburb of Srinagar), around A.D. 100.

The system of shifting Kashmir's capital to Jammû province for the winter had evolved by the second century. King Abhimanyu I used to spend



his winters in Darvabhisara (R  jour  ). This was because it does not snow in many parts of Jamm   province. Winter in those areas is not as severe as in Kashmir.

Why does Kashmir get so cold in winter? The *R  j  tara  g  n  * tells us that at some stage the Kashmiris stopped worshipping the N  gas and became Buddhists instead. This angered the N  gas who decreed that Kashmir would be very cold in winter. (I never said that there was *no* mumbo-jumbo in Kashmir's histories.) The N  gas are a recurrent theme in the history of Kashmir. They were among the earliest settlers, were Shaivites and, later, some of them became Buddhists. Their descendants founded the Karkota dynasty around A.D. 627.

Mihirkul, the White Hun, had to flee his father's empire because his cruelty had made him much hated there. His father, Toraman, had ruled over Afgh  nist  n and western India. Mihirkul was given shelter and an estate by the then king of Kashmir. He repaid this favour by killing his host and usurping his kingdom in A.D. 528. Mihirkul attacked G  ndh  r, was hostile to Buddhism and eventually committed suicide.

Kashmiri historians argue that Kalidas, the 5th/ 6th-century poet, was a Kashmiri. In support of their argument they point to Kalidas' description of Kashmir in *Shakuntala*, references to Kashmir in *Meghdoot*, his religious views, his familiarity with trees like the deodar and flowers like saffron, as well as his familiarity with Kashmiri legends and history.

Pravarsen II, a prince from the central Indian kingdom of Malwa, conquered Kashmir around A.D. 580. He founded the city of Srinagar at what he called Pravarsenapura. It was he who got constructed, using boats as the base, the first of the seven bridges of Srinagar. (Till 1947, the number remained at seven. When the eighth bridge was built, it was simply called the 'Zero Bridge'.) Pravarsen 'ascended to heaven' near Maheshwar and was succeeded by Ratnaditya, and then Onta Dev.

(King Ashoka had, in 250 B.C, founded an earlier version of Srinagar: the present day Pandrethan, which you will pass a kilometre or two before you enter Srinagar by road from Jamm  . It was called Shrinagari. 'Shri' refers to Lakshmi Devi ji, the goddess of wealth. 'Nagari' means town.)

### **Lalitaditya-Muktapida, the great empire-builder**

Lalitaditya-Muktapida's reign (A.D. 725-753 or 724-761) is considered one of the best in the history of Kashmir. His many conquests outside Kashmir resulted in a huge empire. P.V. Mathew' says that he 'subjugated almost the whole of India under his domain.' It stretched from Baltistan, Dardist  n and parts of Tibet to the Punj  b (certainly Jalandhar), K    gr  , Poonch and Kanyakubja.



He also conquered almost all of Afghânistân (Gândhâr), Peshawar (Purushpur) and Jammû. The kingdom of Kannauj (much of modern Uttar Pradesh) was then ruled by Yashovarman, who surrendered to Lalitaditya. The Kashmiri king then conquered Kalinga (Orissa) after a difficult war.

His conquests were so many that, Al-Beruni says, there used to be a festival every year to celebrate them.

We know that Lalitaditya had elephants in his army. Elephants are unknown in modern Kashmir. However, fifty-thousand-year old elephant fossils have been found in Kashmir. So, did elephants continue to live in Kashmir till as recently as the eighth century A.D? Or did the elephants in Lalitaditya's army come from his conquests outside the state? Either way this is an interesting factoid.

Lalitaditya defeated King Javita Gupt, who ruled over Gaur and Magadha (Bengal and Bihar, respectively). Karnataka, Gujarât and Mahârâshtra were the next to fall to his might. He certainly overran the seven Konkans (which include Keralâ, Goa and what is still known as Konkani).

Incidentally, the Gujarâti language and the caste-names of that state are somewhat similar to Bhaderwâh's language and names.

Historian Amit Kushari writes, '[This] powerful king of Kashmir looted a lot of silver and gold from these areas of India and filled his treasuries at Srinagar... [He] built a large number of temples, canals, drainage projects and installed huge statues of [Buddha] and Shiva made of copper, silver and gold. He reconstructed the famous sun temple of Mârtañd... His capital was about 30 miles north of present-day Srinagar in a place called Parihâsaporâ [Bârâmulâ district]... Some remains of his glory are still visible in Bârâmulâ district.'

### **The Kashmirîs settle in, rule and influence Keralâ**

*The migration of Saraswat Brâhmins:* During the course of four unconnected field studies (in Goa and Mahârâshtra and about Kerala and the Mangalore area), I noticed a tendency among the Saraswat Brâhmins to trace their ancestry to Kashmir. This is also true of the Christians of the Konkani. Many of them claim that their ancestors were Saraswats before their conversion to Christianity. Even some Maharashtrian Brâhmins make this claim. These Saraswats say that their ancestors had migrated from Kashmir around the turn of the previous millennium, perhaps with the Shankarâchârya, when he returned from Srinagar to Keralâ.

The very Kashmirî complexion and light eyes of people like Miss World Aishwarya Rai (whose community, too, claims a Kashmirî origin) indicates that there might be something to this belief. It would be rewarding to study the family trees of such Konkani people to trace their roots to particular villages in Kashmir.



P.V. Mathew takes this theme forward enormously by offering irrefutable evidence, and making startling (and groundbreaking) claims. For instance, he says that 'Kashmiri culture reached Keralâ almost twelve centuries back, which also paved the way for the formation of [the] 'Malayalam' language.'

*Mathew's Theory: Kashmir's links with Keralâ*

Karnataka fell into Lalitaditya's lap without much effort. Not only Queen Ratta but also the people of the State welcomed the Kashmiri conqueror 'and offered [him] hospitality.' Apparently Keralâ (then called Cherânâd) had been devastated only a few centuries before by a storm of meteors. This seems to have destroyed the cities-and also the high culture-of Keralâ. So, when Lalitaditya came calling, he did not seem to have 'encountered any king [or] for that matter any cultured people,' Mathew tells us. He did meet some aboriginal people, though.

Mathew adds, 'It is this king who first gets mentioned in the legend of Keralâ as "Parasurâm", which word might be the shortened form of "Parihaspura" or "Parihasakeshwa".' [But Parasurâm is also an ancient name in its own right.-PD]

This man called Parasurâm (presumably Lalitaditya) took over the entire Konkan tract between Goa (then called Gokarn) and Kanyâkumâri, because he had an army and the local people perhaps had none. They were too scattered in tribes to have put up a united front. Besides, as mentioned, they had no king. So, what did this conqueror do with the land? At least in Keralâ he gave it away to 64 Nambûdiri Brâhmin families-'the keepers of the temples'-whom he had brought with him from up north.

*The Rājātaraṅginī* clearly mentions sixty-four royal gatekeepers, who represented the sixty-four main temples of Kashmir. It adds that Lalitaditya sent them to construct a temple at Mahodayapura, on the lines of the temple at Mārtaṇḍ. Now, Mathew penetratingly reminds us, in those days Mahodayapuram was the capital of Cherâ (Surâ) Nâd. It was later renamed Tirchendur. If further proof is needed, he adds, 'We can see to this day the statues of those sixty-four [gatekeepers] arranged in the Subrâhamani Swâmi temple at Tirchendur, in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nâdu.' Subrâhamani Swâmi is the same as Lord Mahodaya.

These sixty-four men elected one of themselves as the ruler of Cherânâd. The second of these rulers was Pâṇḍi Perumal. Now the temple at Mārtaṇḍ is called the '*House of the Pâṇḍavs*', or the *Pâṇḍav Larî*. Therefore, Mathew assumes that this ruler had come from Mārtaṇḍ. The Perumals-and then the Kalâsêkhar Varmâs-ruled Keralâ from the 8th to the 11th century A.D. Mathew says that even the Varmâs had been sent from Kashmir to rule Keralâ. He links them to Kashmir's King Avantivarman. (That does explain things. I have always wondered how Keralâ's talented kings got the very North Indian surname Varma.)



Apparently in the eighth century, while some Kashmiris were Shaivite Hīndūs, many followed the Manichæan religion.<sup>2</sup> This division was duly reflected in the religious composition of the sixty-four 'gatekeepers' from Kashmir. Thirty-two of them were Shaivites and devotees of the Sun God. They settled north of the Alwaye River in Ernakulam.

Thirty-one were Manichæans and worshipped the Moon God. They colonised the area south of the river and their capital was Mahodayapuram. The sixty-fourth was the ruler, Cheraman Perumal, himself. He went to Mecca and probably converted to Islām. The Kashmiris' inclination towards Islām is, thus, as old as that.

Another important bit of evidence is that the currency in both 8th/ 9th century Kashmir and Cherânād was the Dinār: as all of Kashmir's old histories record. Mathew says that 'the old coins of Keralā known as Parasûrām Rāssī is the Kashmir [Dinār].'

Along with the good the Kashmiris took along social evils: *the Devadāsī System*, for instance, is mentioned in Kashmir's old texts and vestiges of it are still found in Keralā and several other Konkan regions.

Mathew's theory is extremely convincing-and exciting. However, he does stretch things a bit when he says that 'Nambūdiri Brāhmins from Keralā [were] generally appointed as head priests in the majority of temples in Jammū region by the Dogrā dynasty.' This particular claim does not stand to scrutiny. Neither during my considerable fieldwork in Jammū region nor during my colleague Anil Goswami's even more considerable experience with the temples of Jammū has either of us come across a single such case in present times or evidence of any during the Dogrā era.

Secondly, he says that the Nāirs of Keralā, too, are of Kashmiri origin. Now, one can agree that some Nāirs-the masons and sculptors-almost certainly came from Kashmir: to build the Mahodaya temple at Tirchendur. They had perfected the art at Kashmir's several stone temples. However, the Nāirs are hardly homogenous. They are divided horizontally into three major layers, with little inter-marriage at least with the third and least privileged layer. All of them could not have come from Kashmir.

And then he says that Keralā's matrilineal lineage, matriarchal society and polyandry came from Kashmir. But was the incidence of polyandry in Kashmir ever greater than in the rest of India, especially neighbouring Ladākh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal?

2 '[A] syncretic, dualistic religious philosophy taught by the Persian prophet Manes, combining elements of Zoroastrian, Christian, and Gnostic thought and opposed by the imperial Roman government, Neo-Platonist philosophers, and orthodox Christians.' From *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* © 1996 by Houghton Mifflin Company.



### External Relations: China and the Arabs

The Chinese knew the great emperor Lalitaditya as Mu-ti-pi. He invited them to establish a camp near the Wular lake and to help him against the Arabs.

For the first time in history the Arabs had begun to eye Kashmir. The Chinese did not set up the camp. However, they acknowledged Muktapida's supremacy over the territories that he controlled. He built splendid temples at Parihâsporâ (where he founded a whole city, 22 km. from Srinagar). He entrusted the city to his grandson (perhaps Jayapida) and went on to conquer foreign lands.

Around this time we first hear of contacts between the malechhas (foreigners) and the Kashmiris and the introduction of Muslim customs in Kashmir. (See 'Islâm in Kashmir'.)

Jayapida (A.D. 751-782), too, expanded his kingdom through conquests outside Kashmir. However, his successors were lazy and given to luxury. Almost seventy years of palace intrigues and dissension followed his death.

Till Avantivarman (A.D. 855-883) came along, that is. This king chose to improve his kingdom, rather than conquer foreign lands. Among his major achievements were the draining of the Valley by Suyya, his legendary chief engineer, the founding of Awantiporâ and Sopore (Suyyapur), and the revival of Sanskrit learning. During his reign, architecture reached levels not attained since Lalitaditya's time. It was not to be surpassed in the next five hundred years either.

Around this time, the great Shankarâchârya (A.D. 788-820) is believed to have visited Kashmir. Apparently he was influenced by Kashmir's Shaivism.

There are several views about when the Adi Shankarâchârya was born. A second school believes that this was in A.D. 740. The Kanchi Math's records suggest that he might even have been born as early as in 509 B.C.<sup>3</sup> Either way, he challenged the religious order that then dominated Kashmir. Most people say that this religion was Buddhism. Mathew insists that it was Manichæa[n]ism. Again, either way, the scholar-saint succeeded in getting the people to see religion his way. Mathew says, 'He was the [one] who expounded the simple monistic theory [of Saivism] to counter the dualistic theory of Manichæ[an]ism.'

3 Mathew has a totally revisionist view about this great teacher-saint's origins. Most people believe that he was born in Keralâ but came to Kashmir to study and to bring about religious and social reforms. Mathew writes, 'Sree Sankara, the profound preacher of Monism (Saivism) belonged to Kashmir. [Emphasis mine.] ... There is no reason to believe that such a versatile scholar ... was brought up in Keralâ. May be [he] was the father of Malayalam language- its creator.' Mathew's theory is that 'the folk language of Kashmir- "Shârdâ"- [mixed with Tamil to] produce Malayalam.'



Avantivarman's successors were not up to scratch. His son Shankar Varman (A.D. 883-902) unleashed an era of economic oppression and the plunder (cannibalisation, actually) of temples. (Shankar stripped the temples of Parihâsporâ for materials to build temples at what he called Shankarpura and what now is Pattan.) He died during the last of his many fruitless invasions of neighbouring states.

### The first Lohara dynasty

Another spell of palace intrigue and decadence followed. Shankar's Kârkota dynasty was replaced by the first Lohara dynasty in A.D. 950. The throne of Kashmir saw eighteen incumbents in the late 9th and 10th centuries. Things got so chaotic that one of these kings, Chakra Varman, was murdered (in A.D. 937) at the behest of his own wives, as he cavorted with a Domba woman.

Queen Didda was a Hindu Shahi (present Afghânistân) princess from Udashanda (Ohind). Officially, she ruled Kashmir from A.D. 980 to 1003. However, her era had begun around 950 itself when she married Kshemagupt, the first Lohara king (950-958). Then she acted as regent during the infancy of Kshemagupt's son Abhimanyu II (958-972 or 980). Finally, she took over directly. In all three phases she proved an unscrupulous, cruel and bad administrator, getting rivals and their families killed. On Didda's instructions, after her death the crown passed to her inept Lohara nephew Sangram Raja of Poonch, who ruled from 1003 to 1028. (See the 'History of Poonch' in the volume on 'Jammû'.)

Sangram's son and successor, King Anant Dev, was considered 'weak but well-meaning'. Under pressure from his wife he abdicated in favour of his son, Kalash. A few months later he changed his mind. The son rebelled. In 1081, a saddened Anant killed himself, and his wife committed sati.

*The Rājātaraṅgīnī* mentions an event that took place in the winter of 1087-88. Every historian cites it because it shows how big the Kashmir-based empire was, and how closely it resembled the present state of Jammû & Kashmir. That winter several hill chiefs came to Kashmir to pay homage to King Kalash (died 1089). These were the chiefs/ kings of Babbapura (Jammû), Chamba (now in HP), Billawar-Basohli, Rājouri, Poonch, Hazara (now in Pakistan), Kishtwâr and a place called Kanda.

### Poets, Philosophers, Creative Men

Such uncertain times sometimes unleash creativity. In the century that followed Didda, Kashmir produced several outstanding men of letters.

Shiva Nath Katju writes, 'For nearly 300 years beginning from the IX century A.D. till the commencement of XI century A.D. Kashmir remained under the spell of the brilliant sages and savants who propounded the Kashmir Shaivism and Trika Shastra. Their unbroken chain beginning from



Shri Kantha and followed by Vasugupta, Kallata, Somananda, Utpalacharya, Lakshmana, Abhinavagupt, Khsemraja and Yogaraja raised Kashmir Shaivism to sublime heights. After the Adi Shankar  ch  rya, no other sage or savant occupies such a dazzling place of honour among the Hindus than Mahamaheshwara Abhinavagupta.'

Abhinavagupt, the Shaivite (born c. 950), was not only a charismatic preacher, he wrote extensively, mainly on philosophy. The Kashmiris, Hindus and Muslims alike, believe that he walked into a cave with twelve hundred disciples, never to emerge again (See also 'Beerwa' in the chapter on 'Budg  m' district regarding the location of the cave.) Dr. Sufi, quoting a 1935 dissertation by Dr. K.C. Pandey, places the said 'Bhairav cave' at 'about five miles from Magam, midway between Srinagar and Gulmarg'. (Not that Abhinavagupt would have known it, but the first Christian millennium was about to come to an end. Such 'millenarian' behaviour took place towards the end of the twentieth century, too.)

Kshemendra, Kashmir's greatest Sanskrit poet, wrote between 1037 and 1066, on subjects as diverse as music, medicine and grammar. He was born to a wealthy family near the present day Nishat B  gh of Srinagar. This enabled him to endow and maintain boarding schools in an era when scholars would come to Kashmir from all over South (and, maybe, Central) Asia. Thirty-four of his books are still extant.

Bilhan, grammarian, poet and amateur historian, was born (around A.D. 1100) in Khunamush (present day Khunmuh, which you will pass just before you enter Srinagar by road from Jamm  / Pahalg  m). He travelled all over India. He went to tutor the daughter of the King of Kalyan (Deccan), fell in love with her, married her, and succeeded to the Kalyan throne.

As we have seen above, the people-and rulers-of Kashmir had close political, religious and even ethnic links with the people of the Konkan, right up to Kerala.

### **The 11th and 12th centuries: Instability and Ineptitude**

But let's get back to government. Kalash's son and successor, Harsh, (1089-1101) combined contradictions. In the beginning he was a sensible ruler. He was a good administrator, was accessible to his people and made sure that his officers were honest. His coins were among the finest minted till then. Some of his troop leaders were Muslim. However, later he started indulging in extravagance and the good life, even incest. He taxed his subjects excessively and on occasion seized idols and melted them for the metal. He became a tyrant. The people hated him. He then started persecuting and killing the feudal chiefs, 'the Damaras'. Now the nobility, too, became hostile to him. This set the stage for two of his nephews, Uchchala and Sussala, both being Lohara princes, to start eyeing the throne of Kashmir.



Uchchala entered Kashmir through Lohara and the Tosa Maidan pass. His brother Sussala came from another side and led the revolt. Harsha died a wretched death. His son Bhoj and he were murdered and his enemies tried to deny him a proper cremation. Bhoj's son Bhiksha Char was too young to succeed them, so Princess Asamati whisked him away to Malwa. Uchchala seized the throne and was in turn killed in 1112.

Sussala took over and promptly started oppressing the people. By 1120, Bhiksha Char had grown. Some hill chiefs helped him regain the throne, though after a fierce battle. Bhiksha Char immediately plunged into the good life and neglected governance. This angered his allies and supporters who, after just six months, called Sussala back from his exile in Lohara. Bhiksha Char, aided by Som Pal, king of Rājouri, sent his army to Rājouri to halt Sussala there.

Historians Hutchison and Vogel write, 'Before this time the practice had become common among Hindu rulers of calling in to their aid, in their mutual quarrels, Turushka or Muhammadan mercenaries, from the Punjab... [On] this occasion such a band of mercenaries was present in Bhikshachara's army.' The head of this band was called the '*Sallara Vismaya*'. In Persian the head of an army is called 'Sipah Salār'. Perhaps both are the same word.

Bhiksha Char was defeated roundly in 1121. He sought refuge at Poshiana in Rājouri. Sussala ruled Kashmir till 1128 when he was murdered. His head was sent to Bhiksha Char, who in turn couriered it to Som Pal.

Sussala's son, King Jayasimha (1128-1154) was the last king of Kashmir who presided over a state of some consequence. His successors were weak. After his death, the hill chiefs (of Jammū, Himachal and other neighbouring areas) all became independent of Kashmir.

In the twelfth century, as one inept king followed another and more palace intrigues ensued, another burst of creativity and learning took place.

#### **More creative work**

Mammata Bhatt, the poet, and his writer brothers Jaiyata and Uvvata belonged to Galandar (near Pāmpore). They wrote fine Sanskrit poetry as well as literary analyses. Mammata, some of whose works are still extant, is believed to be the maternal uncle of Harsha, the great poet-king of Qannauj. (There seems to have been close relations between Kashmir and Qannauj at every stage during the ancient period. For instance, Abhinavagupta's ancestors had come from there in the eighth century A.D.)

Mankha, the poet, became a kind of a philosopher and plain-speaking guide to kings like Sussala who ruled off and on between 1112 and 1128. He first became the Director of the '*Dharmarth*' (the department for temples and religious affairs) and later the Foreign Minister.



The same age produced Kalhan Pandit, the most important historian of ancient and early-mediaeval India. Most of what has been written in this chapter so far is based on his work. Even today, Kalhan's name, and that of his multi-volume *Rājātaraṅgīni* ('the book of Kings', written between 1148 and 1150) pops up in middle class conversations in Kashmir with the same regularity as Shakespeare does elsewhere, i.e. at least once a week. Never mind nitpickers like Aurel Stein, who is one of Kalhan's translators. True, by modern standards parts of the book seem 'unreliable'. However, let's give the man credit for putting together as best as he could the history (and geography and customs) of the roughly 3,600 years that had gone before him. And it is hardly a hagiography that he's left behind for us. He tells us of (Hindu) kings who plundered temples, of horny queens and their libidinous consorts, and of kings who had some specific strengths and other specific weaknesses. Above all, he is as critical of his fellow Brāhmins as he is of the Kayasths.

## The Early Mediaeval Era: that of the Sultans

### The decline of the Loharas

Things started getting bad in the late-thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Decadence and political turmoil paved the way for the first Muslim kings.

During the reign of King Rajadev (1213-1236) the oppression and plunder of the Brahmins was so extreme that they felt compelled to cry, 'I am not a Brāhmin. I am not a Brāhmin.' The misrule of the brothers Simhadev (1286-1300) and Sahadev (1301-1320) made Kashmir a land of decadence and debauchery, of alcohol, gambling and girls who just wanted to have fun.

Finding Kashmir ripe for the plucking, the forces of neighbouring King Karmasen, led by the cruel and rapacious General Dulcha, entered Kashmir through the dZoji La pass, plundered Srīnagar, slaughtered several Kashmiris and 'destroyed innumerable Gods'. Rather than fight, King Sahadev escaped to Kishtwār, leaving behind his Commander-in-Chief, Ramachandra to administer Kashmir. (This seems a constant in the history of Kashmir, right down to the militancy of the 1990s: if things get too hot in Kashmir, seek refuge in Kishtwār.)

Dulcha, also known as Zulchu, must have been a Tibetan or a Ladākhī, considering his king's name, the route that he followed and Jonaraja's mention that Rinchen (a Tibeto-Ladākhī) had accompanied him.

Mediaeval historian Jonaraja described King Sahadev as a 'rakshas' (demon) because of his having plundered and 'devoured' Kashmir. But Sahadev also happened to be a very hospitable and tolerant man. Lankar Chak, a prince



from Dardistan (now in POK), had to flee his land following his defeat in a battle with his own brother. He sought refuge in Kashmîr.

So did Shahmîr, son of Tahir, who is believed to be a descendant of Arjun, the Pandav. He probably came from the Panchagahvra valley, which is thought to be the region between Budhal and Rajauri. Some historians say that he was a Turk. Sahadev, in his generosity, gifted one village each to Lankar and Shahmîr. Little did he know that the two would, in time, found the two dynasties (the Chaks and the Shahmîrîs) that would rule Kashmîr in the centuries to come.

Prince Lhachen Gyalbu Rinchen, a descendant of Ladâkh's legendary King Ngo Rub, too, came to Kashmîr around this time, perhaps along with Karmesen's General, Dulcha. (See also 'The History of Leh' in the volume on 'Ladâkh'.)

Kashmîr was now without a king. So, in 1320, Rinchen got Ramachandra killed and seized the throne for himself. Later, perhaps in order to provide legitimacy to his rule, he married Ramachandra's daughter, Kota Rani.

### **Sultan Rinchen/ Sadr-ud-Din (1320-23)**

Rinchen, the Ladâkhi/ Tibetan, was the first King of Kashmîr to accept Islâm, taking on the name and title Sultan Sadr-ud-Din.

Why did Rinchen convert to Islâm? Jonaraja, himself a Kashmîrî Hindu, says that (the Buddhist) Rinchen tried to become a Shaivite Hindu but Shri Deva Swami and other ranking Hindu priests refused to accept him into their fold. Then Rinchen saw a dream in which he was advised to accept as his guide whoever he first saw the next day. This person turned out to be a Turkistani saint who identified himself as Abdur Rehman, but who is better known in Kashmîr as Bulbul Shah (d. 1327).

Jonaraja describes Rinchen as 'a lion among men', a man of intellect and, in a primitive manner, a just ruler. He got a hospice built at Aali Kadal. Rinchen had a son, Haidar, by Kota Rani.

Rinchen appointed his trusted lieutenant Shahmîr as his vizier. On Rinchen's death, Kota Rani and Shahmîr invited Udyandev, who was Simhadev's brother and was living in Swat or Gândhâr, to rule over Kashmîr. Kota Rani married King Udyandev (1323-1338).

During those fifteen years, it was Kota Rani, supported by Shahmîr, who gave Kashmîr some semblance of administration. The two successfully rallied the Kashmîrîs against invaders, whom the cowardly Udyandev mistook for Dulcha and fled from Kashmîr to Ladâkh. On her second husband's death, Kota Rani spurned Shahmîr's offer of marriage, and ruled Kashmîr directly for five-months (1338-39), shifting her capital to the strong fort of Inderkot (near Sumbal). She appointed Bhutta Bhikshana her prime minister,



bypassing Shahmîr, who, during Udyandev's nominal reign, had become too powerful for her comfort.

### The early Shahmîrîs

Shahmîr revolted and overthrew the Queen, formally becoming the Sultan (1339-42 or 1342-46). He assumed the name Shams-ud-Din Shahmîr. In the process he founded Kashmir's longest running dynasty, which ruled Kashmir from roughly 1339 (or 1342 or even 1346) to 1561. (Well, more or less. In the last 65 years of that era, real power was with non-Shahmîrîs.) During the entire Shahmîrî era, considerable political, administrative and military power was wielded by the Chak and Magrey clans (and, later, the Baihaqis, the Rainas and, to a lesser extent, the Dars).

The Baihaqis were Syeds from Iran and the Rainas were descendants of Rawanchandra (who had converted to Islâm). The Baihaqis were powerful partly because several of their daughters had married kings. Budshah's queen Taj Khatoon and his grandson Sultan Hassan's wife Hayat Khatoon, were both Baihaqi Syeds. On the other hand, Syed Hassan Baihaqi married Budshah's daughter and Syed Mubarak Baihaqi married Sultan Yusuf Shah Chak's sister. In any case, the Syeds are at the very top of the Muslim social hierarchy and it is considered prestigious to have matrimonial links with them.

In ancient as well as mediæval times, the '*Damaras*'—feudal lords—often enjoyed more power than the king would have wanted them to. Several kings—from Muktapida to Rinchen—tried to control them. Most, like Shihab-ud-Din, accommodated them in senior positions in the army and government. And some kings—like the later Shahmîrîs—were reduced to being first among equals, if not figureheads, sharing real power with these five important clans. There is reason to believe that the surname '*Dar*' is derived from '*Damara*'. Some Dars were generals in the armies of mediæval Kashmir.

Kashmîr—whether ruled by Kashmîrî Hindus, Muslims or even Dogrâs—has always followed a calendar different from the Hindus and Muslims of the rest of South Asia. In ancient times Kashmîr used the Laukik, Sapt Rishi and Kali Samvat calendars and in the Dogrâ and post-independence era the Bikramî<sup>4</sup> era (vs. the Saka<sup>5</sup> of the rest of India).

The Kashmîrî Pandits, as well as the people of some parts of HP (notably Chamba, Kâñgrâ and Mandi), used the Laukik calendar till the beginning of the 20th Century. The first day of the Laukik year 3889 corresponds to the

4 1 Bikramî= 57 B.C.

5 1 Saka= A.D. 78



7th March of A.D. 813. The draft of a Government of India document that I chanced upon says that 'on this basis the Census of [AD] 1961 was [conducted, presumably in Kashmir] in the year 5036 of [the] Laukika era.'

During the era of the Kashmiri Sultans, i.e. from 1320 to 1586, till the Mughals took over, Kashmir officially followed a luni-solar calendar that began in A.D. 1320, the year Kashmir was first ruled by a Muslim.<sup>6</sup> Unofficially, some rural Kashmiris continue to use this calendar even in the twentyfirst century. Interestingly, it was not Rinchen who, conceitedly, ordered this dating of the Kashmiri era to the year that he converted to Islām. Shahmīr did this instead, self-effacingly, well after Rinchen's death.

Jonaraja describes Shahmīr as a ruler who brought peace and abolished extortionate taxes. He was succeeded by his sons Jamshed (743), who built a bridge at Sopore and, later, Alauddin (743-755), whose was an era of peace and reconstruction.

Jonaraja says that the era of Alauddin's son Shihab-ud-Din (1354-73) was one of the best in Kashmir's history, being second only to that of Lalitaditya. Shihab-ud-Din comes across as a workaholic, indifferent (at least initially) to wine and women, singlemindedly devoted to military conquests. No Kashmiri ruler after him was able to match his military feats.

The Sultan first subdued Ladākh, Gilgit, Dardistan, Baltistan, Kishtwār, Jammū, Chamba and perhaps parts of Tibet. After that he overran much of the Punjab, defeated the king of Sind and turned westward to capture Ohind, Gāndhār and Peshawar. His victories are said to have sent shivers in Qāndahār and Ghazni. The king of Kāñgrā, then called Nagarkot, accepted his overlordship. Finally, he added Kabul, Kashghar and Badakshan to his triumphs.

Apparently defeating kings was some kind of a sport for Shihab-ud-Din, for he did not build an empire. Instead, he would return the conquered kingdoms to their vanquished kings.

Shihab-ud-Din's was an era of prosperity and toleration. He shot down his Prime Minister Udayshri's suggestion to melt a large brass image of Lord Buddha and turn the brass thus obtained into coins.

The Sultan built two towns, one named after himself and the other after his Queen Lakshmi. Shihab-ud-Din fell in love with Lakshmi's niece Lāsā, whom he later married and at whose behest he exiled Hassan and Ali, his sons by Lakshmi, to Delhi. As a result, Shihab-ud-Din was succeeded by his brother Qutb-ud-Din (1373-1389) and he by the infant Sikander, the so-called idol breaker (1389-1413).

6 According to the international Islāmic, Hijri, calendar 1 Hijra= A.D. 622



### Sikander, the so-called idol breaker (1389-1413)

Sikander's mother Haura (or Sura) got her own daughter and son-in-law, Shah Muhammad, murdered when she found them conspiring against the minor Sikander. His brother, Haibat, was poisoned by Rai Magrey, who declared independence in Baltistan. Sikander crushed Magrey. He also defeated King Firoz of Ohind (G  ndh  r, near Attock), and married his daughter Meera (or Merja). Their second son took the title Sultan Zain-ul-Abedin and is fondly known as Budshah.

Sikander was a major patron of the arts. As a result scholars from Iraq, Khur  s  n and other parts of Central Asia flocked to Kashmir. They started a process of cultural and scientific interaction the effects of which can be felt on Kashmiri culture to this day. He got built two of the greatest monuments of Srinagar, the *Kh  nq  h-e-Mu'alla* and the *J  m   Masjid*, as well as the *Kh  nq  h-e-Faiz Panah* of Tral. (The latter got burnt in 1996. This author had the honour of directing its reconstruction. In 1999, this author got a scaled-down replica of the *Kh  nq  h-e-Mu'alla* built at Suraj Kund near Delhi.) The most obvious example of the above mentioned cultural interaction is that almost all Isl  mic shrines in Kashmir till the 1970s were built in the style that the Sultan imported from Khur  s  n and Luristan (both in Iran).

To his credit Sikander enforced a pristine version of Isl  m in Kashmir: banning alcohol, prostitution and gambling. But did he (or his minister Suhabhatt, aka Malik Saif-ud-Din) go overboard in this and go about destroying idols and compelling the Hindus to flee Kashmir? This has been examined in the chapter 'Isl  m in Kashmir'.

### Sultan Zain-ul-Abedin (@Budshah) (1420-70)

Ali Shah (1413-20) succeeded his father Sikander. Baltistan was taken away from Kashmir during Ali's reign, because of his ineptitude. Around 1420<sup>7</sup>, Ali asked his younger brother and minister, Shahi Kh  n, to look after the kingdom while he went to Mecca to perform the Haj pilgrimage.<sup>8</sup> However, Shahi Kh  n refused to return the throne to Ali, wresting it from his brother with the help of Jasarat Kh  n, chief of the Gakkhars. Shahi Kh  n went on to become Sultan Zain-ul-Abedin (1420-70) aka Budshah.

7 This could have taken place as early as in 1416 or 1417, because the incident has been mentioned in the *T  reekh-e-Kashmir-e-Azami*, which is supposed to have been written in 1417.

8 Sultan Ali decided to go to Mecca via Jammu. His wife was the daughter of the king of Jammu. When she married the king of Kashmir, a retinue of people came with her from Jammu to keep her company. They settled in an area that came to be known as Jamalatta, pron. ja-m  l-at-t  . It means Jamw  l-hatta, or the 'marketplace set up by people from Jammu'.



(*Khân* does not imply a 'Pathan' origin. Incidentally, 'Pathan' is an Anglicisation. The correct word is 'Pushtun'. In Kashmir, most princes and army generals went by the title '*Khân*'. The history of Kargil, too, is filled with *Khâns* who have nothing to do with the Pushtuns. After all, old Genghiz was no Pushtun, either.)

Despite its immoral start, Budshah's reign marks the golden age of Kashmir. He has the same stature in the history of Kashmir as do Akbar and Ashoka in that of the sub-continent as a whole. He was a much-loved king whose court judgements are famous for their fairness and whose reign was marked by prosperity.

I admire the man for his vision. He built artificial islands (see 'Wular' in 'Bârânullâ' district), bridges, canals (Zaina gir), aqueducts and caravanserais. The Sultan sent talented people abroad (mainly to Central Asia) for technical training and invited foreign experts to Kashmir to upgrade local technology. Most of these experts were offered incentives to settle in Kashmir. (Budshah was no parochialist. He wanted the best men, regardless of whether they were Kashmirî, from the plains of India—e.g. his Chief Justice—or from Central Asia.)

One of these foreigners was perhaps an Egyptian called Youza Asaph. He might be the one buried at Rozabal (Srinagar). Some 19th and 20th century scholars, Indian, Pakistani, Israeli and European, claim that Youza Asaph was none other than Lord Jesus Christ himself. If it can be proved that Youza Asaph was the Egyptian envoy to Budshah's court, at least that theory will be laid to rest.

I had always assumed that the Potala Palace of Lhasa and the Leh palace were, in that order, the first skyscrapers in the world. It was while reading up for this book that I realised that it was the Leh Palace (early 17th century) that inspired (and predated) the Potala Palace (late 17th century), and not the other way around. Budshah's twelve-storey palace preceded both by two centuries and was perhaps the world's first skyscraper. Unfortunately, the Chaks got this wood and glass palace, the Zaina Dab, burnt-and during Budshah's reign itself. Mirza Haidar Dughlat, the Central Asian who ruled over Kashmir seventy years later (1541-51), wrote that there were 50 rooms in each of the twelve floors. Its windows were made in the '*pinjra kâri*' (latticed) fashion. The Mirza was either going by hearsay or from what he saw of the ruins. Or it is possible that the Chaks burnt the place during the period that they ruled over Kashmir (1555-85), as some historians suggest.

While researching Kashmirî paintings I came upon encyclopaedias of botany and zoology written in Budshah's time, with entries arranged in the Persian alphabetical order. I have also seen copies made during the Dogrâ



era (19th century) of illustrated books on the human anatomy written during Budshah's reign.

This fifteenth century king established state-run maternity wards (with midwives brought from Samargand), as well as hospitals. The man was simply amazing, and centuries ahead of his time. Even more impressive is the story of how his Chief Medical Officer took almost two years to decide where the state hospital should be located. (He did this by leaving animal flesh at five different locations in Srinagar. He studied the putrefaction of the flesh at each site for over a year. A site near the present TB Hospital was found the most suitable.)

Obviously the Sultan surrounded himself with the best talent—Muslim as well as Kashmiri Pandit, notably the historians Jonaraja and Shrivara, who are the main sources of all that we know about Budshah.

Above all, the Kashmiri Pandits fondly remember Budshah for having brought their community, almost all of which had fled Kashmir during Sikander's era, back to Kashmir. His personal physician, Shiv Bhatt, and the Superintendent of the Courts of Justice, Shriya Bhatt, were both Pandits. Budshah withdrew all the measures that Suhabhatt, the minister, had taken against the Kashmiri Pandits. Temples demolished at Suhabhatt's behest were repaired. Budshah guaranteed the Hindus that they would be tried only according to their own laws. Cow slaughter was banned (as it is in the state to this day).<sup>9</sup> To enable the Hindus to learn their own scriptures, Budshah not only set up '*pathshalas*' (Hindu schools), he also sent them to Kashi and the Deccan.

At Budshah's behest Mulla Ahmad Kashmiri translated the *Mahabharata* into Persian. In 1505, Shrivara translated the Persian book *Yusuf-Zuleikha* into Sanskrit. By now many Kashmiri Pandits were fluent in Persian, a proficiency they retained till the beginning of the twentieth century when they led a Muslim-backed agitation against the Dogra Mahârâjâ's introduction of Urdu as the official language of the State. (The Kashmiris then saw Urdu as a language of the Punjabis.) The Saprus (ancestors, inter alia, of the 20th century poet Allama Iqbal) were the first Kashmiri Hindus to study the Persian language.

9 Today even those of us who claim to be 'secular' sometimes look at history through the prism of the Two-Nation theory. We assume that Urdu is the official language of Kashmir because its population is mainly Muslim. That outsiders can not purchase land in the state because of laws (Article 370 of the Indian Constitution) enacted for the same reason. And that it was the Hindu Dogra Maharajas who banned cow slaughter. Wrong on all three counts. The Hindu Dogras imposed Urdu on an unwilling Kashmiri populace-Pandit as well as Muslim. The same Maharajas banned the sale of land to outsiders.



Budshah was a great conqueror, too. He conquered all of the Punjab, Kulu, Lahaul and Western Tibet. However, his army, commanded by Jasarat Khân Gakkhar, was unable to annex Delhi.

He also codified laws systematically. Instead of increasing taxes (indeed, in some cases they were reduced by 85%) he raised money through copper mines and by obtaining gold dust from the rivers of Ladâkh.

Budshah was a pious, non-violent man. He took a second wife, Taj Khatun, only because the first, Vodha Khatona, had not given him a son. (Both wives were Syeds.) He declined to accept as mistresses the daughters of chiefs subordinate to him. Most famous is the case of Rajya Devi, whose father, Sunder Sen of Râjourî, sent her in a palanquin to Kashmîr for Budshah to marry. Budshah called her 'mother' instead. (She stayed on in Kashmîr, converted to Islâm and later got built the bridge now known as Râjourî Kadal.)

Sunder Sen persisted. He then sent his second daughter, Sundara Devi, to the Sultan. This time Budshah agreed to marry her. She bore him a son, Âdam Khân, the Wali (heir apparent). The people called her Sunderma-ji.

### **Kashmîrî kings who ruled over other parts of India**

Zain-ul-Abedin, as we have seen, had a kingdom that included all of undivided Punjab. It stopped just short of Delhi. Much of Western Tibet and the Buddhist areas of Himachal Pradesh, too, were part of his kingdom.

His forebear, Shihab-ud-Din had conquered most of present day Pakistan, much of Afghânistân, Ladâkh, Gilgit, Dardistan, Baltistan, Kishtwâr, Jammû, Chamba and perhaps parts of Tibet.

Neither was the first Kashmîrî king whose empire stretched beyond the Valley. Nor even were their kingdoms the biggest ones to be based in Srînagar. Both were merely following a recurring trend in the history of Kashmîr, that of ruling over north India. However, Zain-ul-Abedin was the last Kashmîrî king to rule over other parts of the Indian sub-continent.

A few centuries before, Lalitaditya-Muktapida, too, had a huge empire, which included most of undivided India. (See above.) Historian Amit Kushari goes to the extent of saying that 'During this glorious period of Kashmîrî history, Srînagar virtually became the capital of India.'

Several of his successors, Hindu and Muslim alike, were accepted as overlords by the kings of Râjourî, Poonch, Billawar, Kishtwâr and, often, some Himachali kings. Jammû proper/ Babour and Kargil were subordinate to Kashmîr on one or two occasions each.



### The later Shahm  r  s, and their decline

Budshah's sons could not live up to the rich legacy that had been bequeathed to them. Budshah wanted to stop them from quarrelling with one another. So he sent his eldest son   dam Kh  n (whom he did not like) to conquer Guge (Western Tibet) and his second and favourite son, Haji Kh  n, to subdue Lohkot (in Poonch). Both sons won, but, ironically, the favoured Haji now directed his army against his own father, whom the despised   dam supported. War between the two parties ensued at Pallashil (Budg  m) in 1452.   dam won but proved such a poor administrator of K  mr  z that Budshah tried to get him to correct his ways. This angered   dam into revolting against his father at Qutbuddinpor. Haji was back in his father's favour. Therefore, when Budshah died, Haji succeeded him.

(The Valley of Kashm  r is divided into two zones, K  mr  z and M  r  z. K  mr  z is essentially made up of the B  r  mull   and Kupw  r   districts, or north Kashm  r. M  r  z is south Kashm  r: Pulw  m  ,   na  tn  g and much of Budg  m. M  r  z has produced most of the great historians, poets and litterateurs of Kashm  r. Therefore, the people of that area claim that the word 'M  r  z' has been derived from 'M  h  r  j': the emperor. They add that 'K  mr  z' means 'kam' [the lesser] 'raz' [region]. Incidentally, in Kashm  r   'M  r  z' does, indeed, mean the same as the Hindi 'M  h  r  j'.)

(The fact is that Sandhimat, a king of ancient Kashm  r, belonged to the P  ndav dynasty. His capital was at Wular and later got drowned in the lake. Budshah's divers recovered gold from the submerged ruins, sold it and used the proceeds to finance the seven 'Zains' that he got built: bridges, islands, canals and other public works. Sandhimat had two sons, Marhan Dev and K  man Dev. His kingdom was later divided between the two. Marhan's area came to be known as 'M  r  z' while K  man's estate was called 'K  mr  z'.

(But where does this twofold division of Kashm  r leave S  rinagar, a town that contains 22% of the population of Kashm  r? Rural people say that S  rinagar belongs to a third zone: 'Y  mr  z'. This pejorative name has been derived from the Hindu word for the 'angel of death'. That's because the people of S  rinagar produce no grains, fruits or other foods and are seen as parasites on the rural areas that do.)

  dam tried to grab the throne several times after that, trying to cash in on the fact that his brother was a debauched, capricious and unpopular king (who took the title Haidar Shah).   dam failed each time. So, he fled to the plains of India. Sultan (Haji) Haidar Shah (1470-72), a lover of music and poetry, fared only slightly better. He was a weak man, much dependent on courtiers and advisors. He made his younger brother, Budshah's third son, Behram, a minister, but was scared of Behram. He even denied his own son



(and, later, heir) Hassan an audience for fear of offending Behram. And this was when Hassan suddenly turned up in Kashmir after a victorious campaign of plunder against the fortresses of the Punjab.

Adam went to Jammu and persuaded the Raja to help him wrest power from his brother, Haidar. However, in 1472 he got into a spat with a Mughal contingent which killed him.

That same year, after a brief reign, one day when Haidar was drunk, he fell off a terrace and died.

An era of palace intrigue had thus begun. It dogged not only the later Shahmiris till their dynasty came to an end around 1551, but also their successors, the Chaks, till the Mughals absorbed Kashmir into their empire around 1586-89.

Hassan Shah (1472-84) was a philosopher, a scholar and very well meaning, but not much of a king. His expeditions against Baltistan and Leh were terrible failures. He had twelve hundred Hindustani (central Indian) musicians in his court and almost as many mistresses. His uncle Behram sought refuge in central India. However, Hassan's detractors persuaded Behram to return to the Valley to seize the throne. Behram failed, was imprisoned and had his eyes gouged out.

When Hassan died, his son Muhammad was just seven months old. So, Hassan decreed that either Adam Khan's son Fath, or Behram's son Yusuf should succeed him. However, Syed Hassan Baihaqi, the powerful prime minister, decided otherwise. His daughter Hayat was the Sultan's wife and young Muhammad's mother. He installed his infant grandson, Muhammad, on the throne and made himself the regent. A very unpopular regent at that.

### ***Fin de siecle: Power shifts to warlords***

After that, for the next forty-eight years, Muhammad Shah (or his proxies) and his father's cousin, Fath Shah, kept fighting bloody battles, dethroning each other and ruling Kashmir in turns. Fath had three such innings and Muhammad as many as five. However, at the personal level they behaved most generously towards each other.

Because of these frequent changes, once again the position of the king of Kashmir became weak. Therefore, the other five important clans of Kashmir, especially the Chaks, came into focus. Intrigues followed. Let us go back to 1486, when Sultan Fath Shah had just wrested the throne from his nine-year old nephew, Muhammad Shah.

Shams-ud-Din Chak had started his career in the employment of several nobles, beginning with the Baihaqi scion Syed Muhammad. He then worked under Malik Nauroz and finally under Sultan Fath Shah's able Chief Minister, the Dar scion, Saif. (Malik Nauroz and his father Ahmed Aswad were



Amir-e-Dar [Lord Chamberlain] and Prime Minister, respectively, under Sultan Hassan.) That left the Raina clan, so Chak ingratiated himself with the brothers Shankar and Musa and persuaded them to challenge his last master, Saif Dar.

When Saif Dar and Shankar Raina died, Shams-ud-Din Chak helped himself to all the powers that Saif had enjoyed as Chief Minister. He got a fellow Chak, Kaji, to take on Baihaqi, his former master. The alarmed Baihaqi quickly allied himself with the deposed, teenaged Muhammad Shah, the Magrey scion Ibrahim, Musa Raina's son Idi, and another important family, the Padars.

A bloody battle followed, in which the line-up was the Chaks versus the rest. Initially, the Chaks lost and had to flee to K  mr  z. Baihaqi's forces set the Chaks' houses in Srinagar on fire. Realising that the real action was between the aforementioned clans, with no role for him, Fath Shah, the nominal king, went away to the Punjab, where Shams-ud-Din later joined him.

When Muhammad Shah became the Sultan for a second time (1493-1505) he was still only sixteen. He exiled Mir Shams-ud-Din Iraqi, a religious leader and the Chaks' spiritual mentor, to Skardu. This could have been to spite the Chaks or out of fear that they now were the rising force, within striking distance of the throne itself. It is wrong to see this as the act of a Sunni king against a Shia mystic. Firstly, (as will be seen in 'Isl  m in Kashmir' and 'The history of Kargil'), it is not even certain that the Mir was a Shia, and not a Noor Bakhshi. Secondly, in 1505, the Shia Chaks supported the Sunni Fath Shah in his victorious battle against Sultan Muhammad. Baihaqi was on Muhammad's side.

Shams-ud-Din Chak, now a minister, and Musa Raina were the two most important nobles in Sultan Fath Shah's court. Shams tried to get his fellow Shia Musa's powers reduced. In turn, Musa got Shams killed by a mob. He blamed the Magreys for the murder, for which they were exiled. Musa got Mir Shams-ud-Din Iraqi recalled from exile. The Mir launched a religious campaign. This caused resentment in some circles, the leadership of which Ibrahim Magrey assumed. Ibrahim emerged very powerful in the process. Now it was his turn to compel Musa to go into exile. (This was in 1513.)

As will be seen, once again it were the ministers who were directing the events. Fath Shah was the king in name alone. So, for a second time he decided to abdicate and leave for the plains of India. He was called back by Ibrahim Magrey, who had appointed himself minister. Later, perhaps finding Fath Shah too much of a loser, he joined Muhammad Shah and made him the Sultan in 1514. But five months later Fath Shah returned with a sizeable army, so Muhammad Shah quietly handed the throne back to Fath—for just over a year this time.



Ever the realist, Fath knew that in any case he had to share power with the important clans. So, why not do it formally? He carved Kashmîr up into four parts, kept one part for himself and gave the other three to the Chaks, the Rainas and the Padars. However, these very clans fell out with Fath, allied with the Magreys and tried, unsuccessfully at first, to reinstall Muhammad Shah. They succeeded in their second attempt, by when Muhammad Shah had been promised help by Sikander Lodi, king of a Delhi-based empire.

(One of the most interesting graves in all Kashmîr is that of a prince from Sultan Ibrahim Lodi's family, who died around 1520. He had been murdered at the bottom of a hill that is called the '*Takht-e-Suleiman*' in Persian and the Jyest Laddar in Sanskrit. The grave is in Srinagar's Malkhah cemetery. It has a bilingual, Sanskrit-Persian tombstone. Some scholars claim that the Lodis who were in contact with Kashmîr were Central Asian Lodis, and not the Delhi Lodis. Muhammad Shah's appeal to Sikander Lodi shows that this is not true.

(Secondly, now we see a new trend: Kashmîr's contacts with the outside world had changed. In the past—and during the Chaks' period as well—exile for Kashmîrî princes meant going to Kishtwâr, maybe Ladâkh. Fath and Muhammad, on the other hand, started removing themselves to the Punjab, central India or at least Naushehra, in Râjournî district. Later, in the 1520s, Abdâl Magrey would seek refuge at Emperor Babur's court in Delhi.)

### **How the Chaks became all-powerful**

So, Muhammad became the Sultan for a fourth time (1516-28). The nobles started quarrelling once again. For a while the Rainas, Magreys, Padars and some others ganged up against the Chaks. At one stage Abdâl Magrey seemed on top. He let loose a reign of terror on Kashmîr, which found its saviour in Masood Chak, who drove Abdâl out. The Chaks grew even more powerful when Masood crushed an attempted coup against Sultan Muhammad Shah. The same three clans, allied with Fath Shah's son Sikander, had led the coup.

Now, the Mughal Emperor Babur sent his army to Kashmîr to exploit its political disorder. Masood's father Kaji Chak came out of retirement to, successfully, lead the Kashmîrî army against the aggressors. This made the Chaks the virtual rulers of Kashmîr. The Chaks removed Muhammad from the throne. They replaced him with his own son Ibrahim, who also happened to be Kaji's nephew. So much for looking at history in Shia vs. Sunni terms: the Shia Chaks were related by marriage to several Sunni Shahmîrî sultans and other Sunni nobles.



Abdâl Magrey returned from Delhi with a sizeable Mughal army, ousted Ibrahim, replaced him with Fath's son Nazuk Shah (1529-30), was appointed the Chief Minister, recompensed the Mughal army and chased Kaji Chak out of Kashmir. Soon, he tired of Nazuk Shah, recalled Muhammad Shah from his prison in Lohkot, and installed him as the Sultan (1530-37).

This was the first time in recorded history that Delhi had a major say in the destiny of Kashmir.

In 1531, Babur's son Humayun sent an army of thirty-thousand horses, led by Mahram Beg, to capture Kashmir. Once again the elderly Kaji Chak united the warring Kashmiri nobles and led the Kashmiri army to victory against the invaders.

The King of Kashghar, Sultan Abu Saeed Mirza, fared better. His army of twelve thousand, led by his son Sikander and the legendary Mirza Haidar Dughlat, entered Kashmir through 'Tibet' and Lar. They vanquished and occupied the Valley for three months, during which they looted it of its treasures. They also made Muhammad Shah give his daughter in marriage to Sikander. The year is not clear: perhaps 1531. (Kashghar is now in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China. Today the people of Kazakhstan officially claim Dughlat as their own for reasons that are not obvious from his career.)

The next three Shahmîrî kings of Kashmir (1537-1540) were puppets in the hands of, and related by marriage to, Kaji Chak. They ruled for roughly one year each. The Magreys then asked Emperor Humayun to help them oust Kaji. So, in 1540, Humayun sent to Kashmir an army commanded by his uncle (Babur's cousin) Mirza Haidar Dughlat. Kaji Chak, once again the defender of Kashmir's independence, lost. So he presented himself before the Mughals' biggest rival, the redoubtable Sher Shah Suri.

Around 1538, the later Shahmîrîs once again, in their weakness, carved Kashmir into three parts. Mirza Haidar helped himself to Kaji Chak's share, assigning the other two to Abdâl Magrey and the Rainas.

### **Mirza Haidar Dughlat: A 'Mughal' Interlude (1541-51)**

Mirza Haidar Dughlat aka Gurgan aka Kashghari seems to have been destined to rule Kashmir. He first did so, though briefly, around 1531, on behalf of the king of Kashghar, entering Kashmir through 'Tibet' (actually Ladâkh). He returned a few years later, this time on behalf of the emperor of Hindustan, through Naushehra (Râjouri).

He was born in Tashkent in 1499. His father, Muhammad Hussain Gurgan Dughlat had intrigued against Babur in Kabul, but was forgiven because, after all, he was family. (Hussain's wife—Mirza Haidar's mother—was the younger sister of Babur's mother.)



In 1509, Babur summoned the ten-year old Haidar to Kabul and took him under his wings. However, five years later ambition took Haidar to Farghana, where he joined another relative, Sultan Saeed, for whom he invaded Ladâkh, then Kashmîr, Nepal and parts of Tibet. When Sultan Saeed died in 1533, Haidar returned to the Indian Mughals and went to Lahore, where he was made the governor of Punjab.

Babur's son Humayun wanted to annex Kashmîr. He looked for an omen in the Holy Quran. His advisers interpreted the omen as meaning 'Don't invade Kashmîr'.

Kashmîr lost its independence a) in gradual stages, and b) because noble after disaffected Kashmîrî noble would invite Delhi to help him against whoever was ruling in Srinagar. The process had begun around 1516, with Muhammad Shah's appeal to the Lodis.

Mirza Haidar was the first non-Shahmîrî to be the *de facto* ruler of Kashmîr since Shahmîr. This was because several Kashmîrî warlords, living in exile in the Punjab, had invited him in. (These were Kaji Chak, Abdâl Magrey and Reegee Chak. As we have seen, Kaji had also curried favour with that other emperor of Hindustan, Sher Shah Suri, to whom, in 1540, he had given his niece in marriage.)

Haidar invaded Kashmîr in 1540. He met with no resistance. Not initially. However, in August 1541, Kaji Chak tried to regain Kashmîr, aided by his newly acquired in-law Sher Shah's army of five thousand horses. He failed. He was killed in Khanpur, near Srinagar.

Haidar was the regent of Kashmîr. He ruled Kashmîr by propping up the puppet king Nazuk Shah (1540-51), son of Fath Shah. The Chaks—sometimes Reegee alone and at times together with Kaji—occasionally tried to depose Haidar, but were defeated each time. Haidar could easily have proclaimed himself the Sultan of Kashmîr. He did not do so out of regard for Humayun who, by then, was a refugee in Iran.

The Mirza proved a remarkably popular ruler. It would be unfair to Haidar to compare him with a giant like Budshah, who had ruled five times as long (and thus had had much more time to develop Kashmîr). However, he followed a similar formula: introduce new Central Asian handicrafts and revive industries to provide employment, provide justice and extend the boundaries of the kingdom of Kashmîr. Accordingly, he annexed Baltistan, Râjourî, Kishtwâr and Pakhli. He added '*hammams*' (hot baths) to Kashmîrî mosques. It is believed that he brought the '*khatamband*' ceiling to Kashmîr.

However, factional squabbles, which had been the bane of his predecessors, bogged down the Mirza, too, towards the end. It is not clear whether he was killed by a butcher, between whom and the Mirza there had been a communication gap because the latter knew little Kashmîrî, or by mistake by his own armour-bearer, Shah Nazir.



Upon Dughlat's death, the Raina scion, Idi, controlled Kashmir for a few months in 1551. Sher Shah Suri's son Salim Shah, whose wife was a Kashmiri (and a Chak, to boot), sent a force to invade Kashmir. The Chak scion, Daulat, repulsed the attack, boosting the Chaks' power vis a vis the Rainas. Daulat neutralised the Baihaqis and Magreys by first using the stick (imprisoning them) and then the carrot (releasing them and making them councillors).

The Shahmîri king Ismail Shah II (1551-54) was Daulat Chak's puppet and Ismail's son Habib Shah (1554-55), the last of the Shahmîri kings, that of Ghazi Chak. It is difficult to have any patience for versions of history that depict the politics of that era in Shia vs. Sunni terms. On the one hand Daulat and Ghazi were at daggers drawn, though both were Chaks. On the other the Sunni Habib Shah was the Shia Ghazi's nephew. Because of frequent intermarriage between the Shias and Sunnis, most of the important nobles had a mother or wife from the other sect.

What was amazing about these nobles was their political promiscuity. One day they would cuddle up with one Kashmiri pretender/ faction/ Hindustani emperor and the next day with his direct rival. One day they would prop up one puppet king and the next day conspire to overthrow him.

That's what Ghazi, too, did. He started badmouthing and discrediting his own protégé, Habib.

### **The Chaks: 1555-1589**

One day in 1555, acting on a cue, Ali Chak removed 'Sultan' Habib's crown in full view of the assembled court and placed it on the head of his brother, Ghazi. Habib was imprisoned. Thus began the short-lived Chak dynasty which, in any case, had been the power behind the throne for much of the preceding 65 years.

Ghazi (1555-63) was a great conqueror (he recovered neighbouring areas like Gilgit, Skardu, Pakhli and Kishtwâr). As a ruler he was stern, indeed cruel, and, in a perverse way, scrupulously fair. He ordered his son Haidar's servant's hands to be chopped off for stealing fruit from a tree. Prince Haidar protested a wee bit too violently against this: he stabbed an uncle in the process. So Ghazi got his own son executed.

The Rainas asked a Mughal general, Abul Ma'ali, to invade Kashmir. Ghazi, helped by the Baihaqis, repulsed them. Then, in 1559, members of a disaffected branch of the Chak clan invited Haidar Dughlat's cousin, Qara Bahadur, to bring an army of ten thousand to dethrone Ghazi. The attempt was put down ruthlessly. That last word wasn't used loosely. Not only were seven thousand of the invaders killed, their skulls were removed and



placed before the king. Headhunting was certainly practised, even if only on occasion, during this phase of Kashmîr's history.

Hussain Shah (1563-70) had less extreme views—and ways—than his brother. He reserved three days a week for Hindu saints: and an equal number for Muslim divines. He founded a college and would give away large sums in charity every Friday, after the congregational prayers. His brother Shankar (a name common among the Kashmîrî Muslims of that era) tried to wrest the crown from him. Shankar was vanquished by his own (and Hussain's) brother Ali Khân (later Shah) and Muhammad Naji, whose illustrious grandson Malik Haidar Chadoora was both a historian and a major player in history. This naturally strengthened the position of Ali, Naji, and their descendants.

Around 1569, the Mughals sent an embassy to Kashmîr. One of Akbar's envoys, Mirza Muhammad Muqim, got the execution of a Kashmîrî murderer, Yusuf Mandav, stayed. Instead, he got the religious judges, who had sentenced Mandav, killed. Hussain Shah was involved in neither action. However, this led to enormous tension between the supporters of Mandav and those of the religious judges.

Some Kashmîrîs, led by Haji Ganai, reported against Hussain and Muqim to Akbar, who was furious. Hussain sent his daughter to Agra for Akbar's son Salim to marry. He also sent presents. Akbar returned both. The shock incapacitated Hussain, who abdicated in favour of his younger brother, Ali Shah (1570-79).

Ali, too, was a tolerant Sultan. His Prime Minister (and son-in-law) was Syed Muhammad Mubarak Baihaqi, a Sunni. He defeated Bahadur Singh, king of Kishtwâr, who gave his sister Shankar Devi (later Fath Khatoon) in marriage to prince Yaqoub, Ali's grandson. (What was that about big fish eating small fish, which, in turn, ate the smallest fish?) In 1574, Akbar sent another embassy to Kashmîr. This time the emperor, in the magnanimity of his heart, agreed to accept as his daughter-in-law Hussain Shah's daughter, as well as presents, both of which he had previously spurned.

And then Kashmîr's independence was whittled down even further. Ali Shah accepted Mughal suzerainty in the traditional fashion: by including Akbar's name in the Friday sermon (khutba) and minting coins in his name. His opponents went much further in cosying up to warlords from Hindustan: Nazuk Shah's sons allied with them to invade their own motherland. The Chaks beat them back.

From 1576, Kashmîr was struck by famine for three years in a row. Contemporary historians recorded that some people resorted to cannibalism to stay alive. A sufi saint predicted that the famine would end only when Ali died. That he did in 1579, while playing polo at Srinagar's famous Idgah.



Now Ali's brother, Abd  l Kh  n Chak, wanted to seize the throne which Ali's son, Yusuf, wanted to inherit. While the two fought it out, Ali's body lay on the ground, just outside the city, for several days, unburied.

### **Yusuf Shah Chak (1578 and 1580-86) and Habba Khatoon**

The alliance of Yusuf Shah Chak, his brother-in-law Syed Mubarak Baihaqi and cousin Lohur Yusuf won the battle. Yusuf was made the Sultan. (Sufi says that Mubarak was married to Yusuf's daughter. Personally, I agree with historians who say that it was Yusuf's sister, Sultan Ali's daughter, whom the Syed had married.) However, things started going wrong for Yusuf almost from day one.

Yusuf was a genius. Some historians believe that he is the father of Kashm  r   classical music: he certainly composed the '*R  st (raga) Kashm  r  *'. His verses, in the Persian language, are profound and have acquired the status of proverbs. It was he who discovered the tourist potential of Gulmarg. The meadow was probably called '*Gaurimarg*' before Yusuf gave it its present name. And then there was the beautiful and talented poetess Habba Khatoon.

With so many extra-mural activities, something had to give. In this case, the nitty-gritty of day to day administration did. The sultan's nobles, significantly Baihaqi and Lohur, turned against him and overthrew him. Yusuf landed up at Akbar's court for refuge and help (to regain his kingdom). The emperor avoided giving Yusuf an appointment for almost a year, insisted on calling the deposed sultan 'Yusuf Kh  n' (his title before he became the Shah of Kashm  r), rather than 'Yusuf Shah' (King Yusuf), and insisted on referring to Kashm  r as his, Akbar's, B  gh-e-Kh  sa (special garden).

However, simultaneously Akbar ensured that Yusuf lived in some comfort, in or near the Mughal palace. Knowing Yusuf's tastes, the emperor arranged for the exiled king to have as many as two brand new wives during his stay in Agra.

According to one source, there was an Italian musician called Tona Santa (Tansen to you and me) living in the same royal guesthouse as Yusuf. On two occasions Tona Santa @ Tansen made mistakes: while rehearsing and during a performance. Yusuf, the consummate musicologist, advised Tansen on how to avoid such errors.

If you want more such juicy, and perhaps outrageous, details (obtained from contempor  ry Persian sources: I haven't made anything up) you will have to pray for me: that I am able to complete my two-volume book on the life and times of Yusuf Shah Chak and Habba Khatoon.

No, seriously, what about Habba Khatoon? Did she exist at all? Was she from Gur  z? Did she actually marry Yusuf? Was she really buried at



Panthachok (on the national highway, just before we enter Srinagar from Jammû/ Pahalgâm)? These are the most frequently asked questions about this legendary poet.

Well, obviously someone wrote all those sad and delicately crafted Kashmîrî songs. (Habba, like Lal Ded before her, went against the prevalent tradition of composing poems in Persian.) The Indo-Islâmic practice is for the poet to mention her name in the last verse, '*the maqta*'. The names '*Habba*', '*Habba Khatoon*' and '*Zooni*' have been mentioned unambiguously in the *maqta*s of these autobiographical songs.

Her songs clearly mention that she hailed from the upper part of Tsandhâr (also spelt and pronounced Chandahara), a village near the saffron fields of Pâmpore. She also tells us that her '*yâr*' (beloved) was called Kamâl and lived in Jamalatta (a neighbourhood in Srinagar town), that her father's name was Syed '*ul Bahâr*' (correctly, Syed Baha-ud-Din) and her mother's Badi-ul-Jamâl. In verse after verse she talks of her servants, privileged upbringing, education, ornate '*palanquin*' and expensive food habits. After such precise details how can we accept the theory that she was from Guréz, her family was poor, her father was called Abdi Rather and her (first) husband was a rustic called Aziz Lone? (Separate research indicates that it was her mother who was from Guréz.)

Ghulam Rasool Bhat has conclusively proved that Habiba Khatoon aka Habba aka Zooni was, like her husband Kamâl, a Syed. Her ancestors had, like many other persecuted Syeds, migrated from Iran only three generations before. Details of her lousy marriage, her tyrannical mother-in-law and suicidal thoughts are contained in her songs.

But the question is, did she actually marry Yusuf? The two main local Persian texts of the period are *Baharistan-e-Shahi* and Malik Haidar Chadoora's history. People who lived at the same time as Yusuf and obviously liked him have written the two books. Neither even mentions this legendary beauty. Nor does the contemporâry Mughal historian Abul Fazl, who has plenty to say about Yusuf, though. There is no proof that Yusuf and Habba had ever met. (20th century artist Ghayoor Hassan is the only one whose portraits of Yusuf and Habba are extant.)

Birbal Kachroo was the first historian to mention Habba, and that almost two hundred years after her death. He merely says that Yusuf gave her 'the honour of sharing his bed' (*sharf-e-ham bistari*). It was only as recently as in the 19th century that historians compelled Yusuf to retrospectively make an honest woman of the poetess. And yet, I believe that they did marry. That's because G.R. Bhat has discovered a family tree that shows that she had a son called Haidar. That, we know separately, was the name of Sultan Yusuf's youngest son as well, a sweet boy who sacrificed himself for his elder (step-?) brother, Yaqoub.



The theory that Habba was buried in Panthachok is as recent as the 1950s. There is an unmarked female-grave in Basok (Bihar), close to Yusuf's. I believe that's where this exquisite poetess rests.

But let us return to more mundane (and historically certain) things like palace intrigues and coups.

### **Yusuf and the revolving door**

Syed Mubarak Baihaqi (1578), an extreme idealist, almost a communist in his contempt for private property, took over from Yusuf. The first thing that he did after his coronation was to break his crown into pieces and distribute the gems among the poor. His nobles weren't too excited by this socialism. They started plotting for Yusuf's return. Baihaqi was too principled to put up with intrigue. So, he abdicated six months after taking over.

Lohur Shah Chak (1579-80), was king for around a year.

As we have seen, Yusuf spent this time in Agra seeking an appointment with, and military aid from, Akbar. At last Akbar sent an army, commanded by Raja Man Singh, to Kashmir, ostensibly to help Yusuf regain his throne.

While he was travelling from Agra to Srinagar, Yusuf began to suspect that Akbar wanted the kingdom for himself. He was also advised that he did not need the Mughal army to get his throne back. In military terms the advice was correct. So, half way through, Yusuf left the Moghul army behind and recaptured Kashmir on his own.

Akbar wasn't amused. Nor was the Raja.

In his second reign (1580-86), Yusuf began on a good note and proved a good administrator. However, his courtiers started conspiring against him again. Once again Mughal help was sought, this time by the nobles.

### **The rage of the sages**

More significantly, two legendary sages sent an embassy to Akbar, asking him to get rid of the Chak sultan. These were B  b   Daoood Khaki and Sheikh Yaqoub Sarfi, spiritual heirs to one of the most respected saints in the history of Kashmir, Sultan-ul-Arifeen Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom (d.1576). They asked Akbar to take over the administration of Kashmir. They also specifically requested that 'the nobles of Kashmir, having been a source of mischief, shall have, for the present, no share in the administration of the country'.

(Many Kashmiris believe that Makhdoom S  heb continued to stand for the accession of Kashmir to India even after he left this world. According to an often-related story, the leading saints of Kashmir got together in Bijebhara around 1944 to draw up the future map of Kashmir. By then the Pakistan Movement was in full strength. In their map the divines allotted



Kashmîr to Pakistan. However, Makhdoom Sâheb appeared before them and tore up the map that they had drawn.

(According to another modern legend, some of the most powerful 20<sup>th</sup> century saints undertook a '*chilla*' around October 1947, to ask God to make Kashmîr accede to Pâkistân. The legend has it that the saints included luminaries like Shamsuddîn Pândânî, Mohiuddîn Andrâbî and Mîr Ghulâmuddîn. A '*chilla*' is normally a non-stop, 40-day prayer in which the devotee goes into seclusion and eats and drinks nothing during the day. Many of these saints were the inheritors of important religious seats, which enjoyed temporal power as well. Some of them expected post-1947 Kashmîr to be run by religious leaders, somewhat like Irân of the late 1970s and '80s.

(It is said that Shamsuddîn Pândânî had the power to bring the dead back to life. So getting Kashmîr to accede to Pâkistân would have been a very minor miracle for him. Well before the completion of the '*chilla*', Makhdoom Sâheb is said to have appeared before the saints and handed them a number of red prayer caps. [Red flags, according to a variant of the legend.] Go to the Srinagar Idgah and place these caps on the heads of [or flag in the hands of] whoever you find there, the Sultan-ul-Arifeen told the saints. The saints found Indian Army soldiers camping at the Idgah. They had to place the caps on their heads [or flags in their hands].

(Now these legends need not be true. But the fact that they were current till the 1980s says something about what the people think Makhdoom Sâheb would have wanted for modern Kashmîr.)

Many historians see the appeal made by Sarfi and Khaki to Akbar as a plea from the leading Kashmîrî Sunni saints of the day to the Sunni emperor of Hindustan to deliver them from the Shia king of Kashmîr. Sheer sectarian tripe.

The envoys to Akbar's court included not just Sunnis but also Bâbâ Khalilullah, the leading Shia saint of the time. On the other hand, Sunni nobles like Ibrahim Khân and the Baihaqi scion Abul Mâli (not to mention, the Sunni Habba Khatoon) stood by the Shia Chaks, Yusuf and Yaqoub, in their defence of Kashmîr against the invading Mughals. Bâbâ Daood Khaki specifically mentions that Ali Shah Chak was good to the Sunnis. Yusuf, we know, was above sectarian considerations. Yaqoub alone was somewhat impatient with the Sunnis and Hindus; but then he was ill-tempered with everyone.

And then we must note that Khaki and Sarfi were fed up not just with Yusuf and the Sunni nobles with him, but also with the Sunni nobles ranged against him. All that the saints wanted was peace, good governance and an end to a century of intrigue and infighting. Only the jaundiced will give a Shia-Sunni colour to that.



### Stalemate: neither side wins

The Mughals were unable to cross the passes after snowfall. This lulled Yusuf into complacency. Meanwhile, his son Yaqoub and he had a major tiff. Yaqoub fled to Kishtwâr. But, faced with the Mughal threat, he made up with his father. Both fought valiantly for Kashmir. It was a long drawn war which neither the Kashmiris nor the Mughals won. Soldiers, including the famous Birbal, General and wit, were dying in large numbers on both sides. (I warned you that my details were a bit over the top, but they are based on solid mediæval sources. Birbal died during this campaign.)

So, Yusuf sued for peace. (Sufi says that he deserted his army.) The Mughal General Raja Bhagwan Das offered fairly honourable terms on behalf of Akbar. Yusuf accepted. The treaty that he signed with the Mughals reads eerily like the Instrument of Accession of 1947: Kashmir would become part of the Mughal empire, but Mughal control would be limited to only certain subjects. In effect, Bhagwan Das conceded Yusuf an Article 370. The details of this treaty are truly interesting, but unfortunately my aforementioned two-volume book on that era is nowhere near completion.

Akbar, on the other hand, was hostile to a special status for Kashmir. He refused to ratify the Bhagwan Das-Yusuf Shah Chak treaty and placed Yusuf under detention instead. Bhagwan Das was hurt that the emperor had refused to honour a commitment that he had made. So, he took out his sword, plunged it into his own stomach and committed suicide.

In 1586, the local nobles placed Yaqoub on the vacant Kashmiri throne. He had doctrinal differences with Qazi Musa, whom he got killed. Shaikh Yaqoub Sarfi and Bâbâ Daud Khaki petitioned Akbar for help. Yaqoub put up a brief but brave resistance. But later that year the Mughals moved into Srinagar, and made Kashmir part of the Mughal empire known as Hindustan. Yaqoub, the last Sultan of Kashmir (1586-89), fled to Kishtwâr, accompanied by Ibrahim Khân and Abul Mâli Baihaqi.

The Chaks are perceived in Kashmir as the last 'indigenous' rulers of the Valley. It is impossible to say who is indigenous and who is not: whether in the Kashmiri context or in that of the Indian nation. The ancestors of both the Shahmîrs and the Chaks were from outside the Valley. If they were indigenised by a few centuries in Kashmir, by the same logic so have been the descendants of the Mughal, Afghân, Dogrâ and Sikh rulers of Kashmir.

### The Mughal era in Kashmir (1586-1752)

#### Akbar (d.1605)

1586 is the year when Kashmir lost its independence. However, Yaqoub persisted with military efforts to regain his kingdom. He caught the Mughals unawares at Cherwani (Budgâm) and re-entered Kashmir as king. But he



proved a hot-headed ruler. His disgruntled nobles collaborated with the Mughals, who sent a bigger army, accompanied, significantly, by the Shia Bâbâ Khalilullah. In 1589, Mughals recaptured Kashmîr.

Meanwhile, Yusuf had become part of the Mughal nobility with a rank of '500' and a jagir in Bihar. After keeping him in prison for two and a half years, Akbar appointed Yusuf as the governor of a tiny estate called Basok. In fact this was an exile. Malik Haidar Chadoora accompanied his friend and mentor Yusuf to Basok.

(Akbar who died in 1605 was succeeded by his son Jehangir, who fancied a married woman who later came to be known as Noor Jehân. In 1607, a warrior killed her husband, Sher Afghân Khân, in Burdwan (Bengal) so that she could marry Jehangir. Sufi says that this warrior was Yusuf. The only problem is that Yusuf's grave specifies that he died in AH 1000 (i.e. A.D. 1592). Others say that the warrior was Haidar Chadoora. What is certain is Noor Jehân sought refuge in Yusuf's house in Basok on Sher Afghân's death. Equally certainly, it was Chadoora who escorted the future empress to Jehangir's capital.)

The triumphant Akbar entered Kashmîr on the 5th June, 1589. He travelled from town to town. He gave gifts of gold to the Brâhmîns of Srinagar and jewelled cows to the Brâhmîns of Martand. He also received local deputations, members of which complained that the Mughal soldiers were harsh and unjust with them. Akbar curbed his soldiers' atrocities through an order.

However, his strict measures (including an ill-fated decision to pay the soldiers in kind instead of cash) led to a crisis and a revolt. Yadgar Mirza, a Mughal noble who was temporarily officiating as the '*Nâzim*' (administrator) of the Valley, briefly declared himself king. His reign lasted only 51 days, after which the Mughals beheaded him.

A severe famine occurred in Kashmîr towards the end of Akbar's reign. He tackled it through Keynesian public works (as we do today). He got built the still extant township of Nâgar-nagar, on and around Srinagar's Hari Parbat.

(Akbar's reign: In Kashmîr, 1586-1605; in India as a whole, 1556-1605).

### **Jehangir (reign: 1605-1627)**

The Mughal emperor Jehangir visited Kashmîr eight times, twice with his father Akbar and six times during his own reign, often accompanied by Noor Jehân.

Jehangir built several palaces, gardens (Veri Nag, Brari Nimbâl, etc.) and summer houses. He started getting an aqueduct built but abandoned the project halfway when he was advised that his enemies might poison the



water. It is claimed that it was he who introduced the Chinâr into Kashmir. Such an assertion flies in the face of recorded history. Jehangir's own memoirs talk of a Chinâr in Chadoora that was large enough for him to pass through while seated on a horse. That Chinâr must have been at least a hundred years old, i.e. older even than Mirza Haidar Dughlat's reign.

Kashmîr's finest monuments are mostly made of wood and, thus, keep getting burnt once in every few centuries, normally by accident but sometimes by design. Even when these buildings get burnt by accident, rumours are floated of sabotage by whichever group or person you don't like. During Jehangir's reign it was rumoured that Srinagar's Jâmâ Masjid was burnt by Malik Hassan, because he was a Shia. The Malik's son, Haidar Chadoora, was a close friend of the emperor. The fact is that it was Haidar who paid for, from his personal fortune, and supervised the reconstruction of this grand mosque.

Jehangir's laws were a mixed bag. On the one hand he banned '*sati*' among Muslim women and abolished some much-hated taxes. On the other hand he introduced several unpopular laws including limited '*begâr*'. He also prohibited marriages between Hindu men and Muslim women.

'*Begâr*', pron. '*bay-gâr*', is translated as '*corvee labour*'. It really means forcing people to work on a public work and often not paying them anything other than the food that they might eat at the site. '*Begâr*' has been a constant in the history of Kashmir. It was certainly known before Akbar annexed Kashmir. When Sarfi and Khaki petitioned Akbar to take over the administration of Kashmir, they specified that the Kashmiris should not be forced to perform '*begâr*'. Shah Jehan later revoked Jehangir's orders introducing '*begâr*'. However, '*begâr*' was to make a comeback in later centuries.

All seven of Jehangir's governors proved just. The Hindus complained to Jehangir against governor Qalich Khân, whom the emperor sent a warning to be just or 'relinquish your administrative post'.

Jehangir recorded in his memoirs that he had married the daughter of the 'prince of Kashmir' who was of 'the society of Jogis'. It is not clear who this prince might have been. Certainly not one of the Chaks. Some of the Chaks had migrated to Basok. Others were so suppressed by Jehangir's governors that they were reduced to 'husbandmen, farmers and horse-keepers'.

One of the governors, Dilawar Khân, during whose tenure Kashmir was racked by plague, conquered Kishtwâr for his emperor. On the whole Jehangir's reign was marked by prosperity in Kashmir, which resulted in higher revenues for the Mughals.



**Shah Jehan (reign: 1628-1657)**

Jehangir's son, Emperor Shah Jehan visited Kashmir four times. His son Murad married a daughter of the Malliks of Veri Nag (which pargana was renamed Shahabad). Poetry flourished in Kashmir. A large number of eminent poets, whose works are quoted even today, lived during this era, though more than half of them were migrants from Persia. The exchange was two-way. Painters from Mughal India and Central Asia would come to Kashmir to paint. On the other hand, some very fine Mughal manuscripts were illustrated (and calligraphed) by Kashmiris who had migrated to Delhi. (This is not a general remark. The precise names of all these artists, calligraphers and poets, as well as many of their manuscripts, are still available.)

There were nine governors during Shah Jehan's reign. Of them, Zafar Khân distinguished himself because of his good and popular administration. He also got rid of the last vestiges of Kashmiri resistance. He first got Abdâl, the Marzbân of Skardu, to read the '*khutba*' (Friday sermon) in Shah Jehan's name. Later, Abdâl tried to assert his independence. Some of the Chaks had been given asylum in Baltistan. So, on Shah Jehan's orders, Zafar took an army to Baltistan, conquered it and shifted Abdâl and the Chaks to Kashmir.

Zafar recommended to, and got accepted by, Shah Jehan an elaborate liberal policy towards Kashmir. For instance, many taxes and restrictions imposed by a predecessor, Itiqad Khân, were removed. (Itiqad was perhaps the most disliked Mughal governor ever.)

Ali Mardân Khân was another much loved governor. Like Zafar, he got many gardens and serais built, obtaining the money from apparently out of nowhere. Legends grew that he possessed the philosophers' stone. He also got the Hurapor road repaired.

During the governorship of Lashkar Khân the Valley is said to have become so prosperous that a bag of unhusked rice could be obtained by giving a fowl in exchange.

**Aurangzeb and the later Mughals****Aurangzeb (reign: 1658-1707)**

Shah Jehan's son, the austere Aurangzeb, visited Kashmir only once. Even that trip was ill fated. A number of elephants in his caravan fell into a ravine, killing some of the royal ladies.

Kashmir had as many as fourteen governors during Aurangzeb's reign. The reasons for these frequent changes included taking sides in Shia-Sunni disputes (Gov. Ibrahim Khân) and imposing harsh taxes (Gov. Muzaffar Khân). The cruel, alcoholic Jafar Khân was killed by liquor within fifteen



months of taking over. Khwaja Sadiq Naqshbandi, a senior official, was flogged to death because he had got flogged a Hindu official accused of embezzlement. One of the governors, Qivâm-ud-Din Khân, invented a wooden cap for criminals.

Thus, Aurangzeb clearly kept his governors on a short leash, to ensure that they were just and impartial and cared for the people. Unlike his father and grandfather, he was no builder, though. However, when Srinagar's Jâmâ Masjid got burnt yet again, he got it rebuilt, and according to its original specifications. Much of what we see of the magnificent mosque today dates to Aurangzeb and the Dogrâs.

Governor Saif Khân conducted a census in Kashmir, around 1670. The then population of Kashmir was 12,43,033. His successor, Governor Fazil Khân, succeeded in getting Mir Inayatullah appointed '*mansabdar*', with a rank of '4000' at that. Inayatullah is the first known *Kashmîrî mansabdar* (a high Mughal rank). In 1717, he became the Revenue Minister of the Mughal Empire. When Aurangzeb's Prime Minister '*Vazir-e-Azam*' took ill, Inayatullah held even that office for a while.

The histories of two even more famous émigré Kashmîrî families also took a decisive turn around now. The Saprûs, whose Lahore-based descendants include the illustrious 20th century poet Allama Iqbal, accepted Islâm. The migration of the Nehrus to Delhi was only a few decades away.

In the *History of Leh* (in a companion volume) we shall look at the conversion of the king there. A revolt by the Raja of Jammû, too, was put down.

Khwaja Noor-ud-Din of Ishawar (in Central Asia; not Ishber, as Dr. Sufi says) brought the '*Moo-e-Muqaddas*', a hair from the beard of Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, to Kashmir in 1700. But that is a long and exciting story in its own right. (See '*Hazartbal*').

### The later Mughals (1707-1752)

Mughal authority began to weaken after Aurangzeb, and not just in Kashmir.

Mir Inayatullah (aka Shaista Khân) was the first Kashmîrî to be appointed governor of the state by the Mughals. His sister, Sâheba Niswân, married Azim-us-Shan, who briefly (in 1712) was the Mughal 'emperor'. King Farrukh Siyar (1713-1719) was her son. The Mir was a descendant of Qazi Musa whom Yaqoub Chak had got killed in 1586. His family had had a long innings in the Mughal court. His mother, Hâfiza Maryam, was the chief tutor of the princesses in Aurangzeb's '*zenana*' (women's quarter). In turn her mother, Jân Begum, had done the same for Shah Jehan's princesses.

In 1713, Muzaffar Khân Bamba revolted. Inayatullah could not prevent this secession. Bamba was one of the small-time rajas under the '*Subedar*'



(Governor) of Kashmîr. He wrested '*Darâva*' and its neighbouring '*Karnah*' (then called Karnâva) away from the Mughals. (Darâva is in the Kishenganga valley.) However, his independence was brief. Inayatullah's successor, Governor Ali Muhammad Khân, put down both Bamba and Abul Fath, the '*zamindar*' (landlord) of Poonch. Ali Muhammad Khân then levied harsh taxes, grew unpopular and was recalled by Delhi.

Pandit Raj Kaul, a noted scholar of Sanskrit and Persian, migrated to Delhi around 1716, at Farrukh Siyar's request. Because his family taxed a '*neher*' (canal), people started calling them the Nehrus. Three of the pandit's descendants went on to become Prime Ministers of independent India. Several others have held high office in the civil and diplomatic services of India and the United Nations.

Another Kashmîrî who did well in central India was the '*subedar*' of Moradabad, Muhammad Murad Kashmîrî (died 1717), also known as Itiqad Khân. He, too, was related to Sâheba Niswan.

Muhammad Shah, better known by his nickname '*Rangeela*' (the colourful one) was the '*emperor*' of Delhi from 1719 to 1748. Kashmîr was not the only province that he neglected in the course of a life dedicated to pleasure. His governors in the Valley would be away from the state for long periods. Instead, they sub-contracted their work to agents and deputies.

The Mughal Governor Aqidat Khân appointed Abul Barakât, a Kashmîrî, as his '*nâib*' (deputy). However, around 1727, his successor, Governor Aaghur Khân, dismissed Barakât and put him in a jail in Delhi. In 1741, the lately released Barakât joined forces with Pandit Daya Ram and two ranking zamindars of Poonch, Muhammad Zaman and Wali Muhammad, and got the Mughal governor, Inayatullah II, murdered.

Once again Kashmîr was racked by intrigue, conflicts between factions, and riots.

Once again Kashmîr was ripe for the plucking.

And once again a glimpse of the next dynasty that would rule Kashmîr was seen well before it took over formally. Or, to be precise, before Kashmîrî nobles invited it to take over formally. *Déjà vu*?

## The Afghâns (1752-1819)

Nadir Shah of Iran established himself as the ruler of Afghânistân and then invaded Hindustan. However, instead of ruling directly, he chose to prop up the aforementioned Muhammad Shah. In turn, the Mughal King gave him the entire area between Kashmîr and Sind. Nadir Shah appointed Fakhr-ud-Daula the '*Subedar*' of Kashmîr in 1739, a tenure that lasted just forty days. The Mughals then changed their mind and Kashmîr returned to Mughal control.



In 1747, Ahmed Shah Durrani succeeded Nadir Shah in Afgh  nist  n. Some ranking Kashmiris sent him a letter asking him to take control of Kashmir. However, the letter reached '*Afrasiyah*', the top Mughal minister, of the day, instead. He got Ahmed Shah, the Mughal king (1748-54) and Muhammad Shah's son, to send a new governor. Mir Muqim Kanth's stint as governor was brief. Abul Barak  t's son, Abul Qasim, hounded Kanth out.

So, in 1752, Mir Muqim and Khwaja Zaheer Dedmari, an influential Kashmiri, went over to Lahore to meet Durrani, who was about to invade central India. At their request he sent an army, headed by Abdullah Kh  n Ishaq Aqqasi, to Kashmir. The last Mughal governor, Abul Qasim, tried to defend Kashmir during a fifteen-day battle. However, when his army chief, Gul Kh  n Khyberi, defected, Qasim tried to flee Kashmir. The Afgh  ns captured him instead.

Thus began the Afgh  n period in the history of Kashmir.

### The Durrani

Ahmad Shah Abd  li, king of Afgh  nist  n, belonged to the 'Sadozai clan of the Popalzai branch of the Abdali tribe living in the province of Herat' (to quote Dr. Sufi). He was heavily into mysticism. His spiritual master gave him the title '*Durrani*' (the pearl). Sufi, like most other historians, assumes that the Durrani were Shias. Ahmad's son Timur and Ahmad himself had both married the daughters of the (Sunni) Mughal 'emperors' Alamgir II and Muhammad Shah, respectively. They were so preoccupied with their wars with the Mughals and the Persians that they had little time for personal supervision of Kashmir. Therefore, their governors were constantly trying to break free.

Their first governor, Abdullah Kh  n Ishaq, levied such high taxes that eighty non-Kashmiri traders left Kashmir and returned to their native lands. Abdullah lasted just six months.

Sukh Jiwan, a '*nazim*' (administrator), succeeded him, advised by Abul Hasan Bandey. These two resisted Ahmad Shah's demands for heavy taxes and, with help from Delhi, declared themselves independent of Kabul. However, thanks to Mir Muqim's machinations, they fell out with each other. Bandey was exiled to Poonch and the Mir was appointed in his place.

In 1762, the Durrani defeated Raja Sukh Jiwan Mal after eight years of independence, when his Commander-in-Chief, Bakht Mal, deserted him. An Afgh  n Khatri, Sukh Jiwan was very popular with the Muslims of Kashmir. However, the Afgh  ns punished him by taking him prisoner and blinding him.

Nur-ud-Din Bamizai, who had three tenures, and Buland Kh  n were the next governors. Both were fairly just. However, during his second stint



(1765), Nur-ud-Din was presented with the case of the murder of Mir Muqim in which, it was felt, he was not just in his decision. He had to leave for Kabul to explain his position, leaving his nephew Jan Muhammad in charge.

Lal Khân Khattak, an Afghân, killed Jan Muhammad and usurped his position.

Kabul quickly sent Khurram Khân to displace the tyrannical Lal Khân, which he did after a bloody battle. Lal Khân withdrew to Beeru, near Pattan.

For eleven months in 1767-68, Mir Muqim's son Faqirullah found himself ruling Kashmîr. This was after he, in alliance with Sultan Mahmud Bamba, defeated Lal Khân, the only Afghân to resist his army. Governor Khurram Khân seemed to be absent from the scene. Chaos prevailed in Kashmîr because no one seemed to be in charge of its administration. That is, till Nur-ud-Din Bamizai was sent in for a third time, in 1769. This time he ruled for two years, and ably, till Khurram Khân was sent to replace him.

Khurram proved timid and weak and was driven out by his own Commander-in-Chief, Ameer Jawân Sher Qizilbash. Ameer Sher turned out to be a good builder, almost on a par with the great Mughals. His best known, still extant, contributions include the Shergarhi (lit.: Sher's fort) complex now known as the Old Secretariat, and the Amira Kadal bridge.

When the Afghân King Ahmad Shah died in 1772, Ameer Sher proclaimed himself the king of Kashmîr. He ruled as such till 1776 when Timur Shah, now the king of Kabul, sent Haji Karimdâd Bâmizai as governor. The transfer of power, however, was bloody and long drawn. Karimdad first defeated Murad Khân, king of Skardu, and then Ranjit Dev, Raja of Jammû. After a few reverses, one of them owing to the perfidy of his ally Fath Khân, Chief of Kathai (Uri), he conquered Kishtwâr. Karimdad was extremely unpopular in Kashmîr. His taxes exceeded even those of Itiqad Khân, the Mughal governor.

A period of violence, some of it allegedly sectarian, began.

Karimdad's virtuous but hot-headed son, Âzâd Khân, succeeded him in 1783. The eccentric Âzâd got his slaves to dress lavishly, while his own clothes were most austere. He subjugated the kings of Kishtwâr, Râjourî and Poonch. Âzâd tried to build a canal where the Maisuma Bazar now is, but could not complete it. Like many of his forebears and successors, he toyed with the idea of freeing himself of his masters in Kabul. Âzâd was a strange mixture of cruelty, harshness and good intentions; his high taxes were ploughed back into the local economy.

Âzâd's cousins rebelled against him, unsuccessfully. The people of Kashmîr complained against him to Kabul, the rulers of which sent an army against him. He committed suicide instead of surrendering.



The next governor, Madad Khân Durrani (1788), was as cruel as Āzād but ruled for just nine months. Juma Khân was his next significant successor. A flood in downtown Srinagar and his effective handling of rebellion marked his four-year tenure.

After a caretaker governor, Rehmatullah, came Mîr Hazar Khân who, too, declared independence from Kabul. He imposed 'jaziya' on the Hindus. His nobles deserted him. Mîr Hazar sought sanctuary in the Khânqâh-i-Mu'alla but was later persuaded to come out and was jailed.

Rehmatullah then had another short stint as governor in 1794. Kifayat Khân, a generous person, during whose tenure (1794-5) sectarian conflict abated for a while, followed him. However, constant squabbling among his nobles led to his dismissal.

More short-lived governorships followed. During one of these, the governor-designate (Arsalan Khân) sent the aforementioned Ameer Jawân Sher Qizilbash to rule in his place. Sher's own tribesmen revolted against him and in a compromise he was made to share power with them.

Abdullah Khân Halokozai had an eleven-year stint (1795-1806) as governor. This was a time when the Kabul throne was changing hands frequently. So, Halokozai started consolidating his position in Kashmir, by decimating the nobility and giving good government to the people.

This was also a period when the Afghâns appointed Kashmirî Pandits on high positions in Srinagar as well as Kabul. Diwan Nand Ram (c.1800) was the Prime Minister of Afghânistân, a favourite of Rahmat Khân, and given the title 'Vafadar Khân'. He had become a minister during the tenure of King Zaman Shah of Kabul. The people used to say "Seem az mâbood, zarb az Nand Ram". (Lit. The wealth of the venerable, the pain caused by Nand Ram: i.e. you won't gain anything but pain by sucking up to Nand Ram; wealth comes only by worshipping the venerable.) The Kashmirî Pandits said with pride "Sakka (sikka?) zad lo mulk-e-Kabul Nand Ram/ Ay Musalmânân ba-khawaneed Ram Ram!" (Roughly: Such is the authority that Nand Ram wields in the land of Kabul, that the Muslims have started saying 'Ram! Ram!') Rahmat Khân was an important noble in the Afghân court and an old Kashmir-hand.

When the governor of Kashmir, Abdullah Khân Halokozai, quarrelled with Nand Ram's protégé, Diwan Har Das, the Diwan of Kashmir, Abdullah was removed from his office and recalled to Kabul. Abdullah asked his brother Ata Muhammad Khân to officiate in his place, but Kabul (meaning Nand Ram) appointed his other brother, Vakeel Khân, instead.

Look at the implications. Firstly, the Afghân Muslim king gives top jobs in his own country as well as in his colony, Kashmir, to Kashmirî Hindus. Secondly, the Hindu Prime Minister is allowed to wield more power than



the king's fellow Afghân Muslims. Thirdly, when the PM's Hindu protégé quarrels with his Muslim boss, who is a nominee of the king, the Hindu protégé prevails. Indeed, a Muslim king punishes his Muslim governor for disagreeing with a Hindu deputy. And yet we are told that the Afghâns were cruel to the Kashmiri Pandits. Some individual Afghâns might have been. But that wasn't the trend. And such Afghâns as were cruel (e.g. Karimdad) tyrannised their fellow Muslims, too, in Kashmir.

### Did the Durrani have a sectarian bias?

A top Shia scholar once told me that the '*pherans*' (cloaks) of the Kashmiri Pandits and Shias were different from the '*pherans*' worn by the Sunnis. That's because Afghân soldiers had the right to ride piggy-back on any Kashmiri Pandit or Shia that they saw. They needed a place to rest their toes. Therefore, Kashmiri Pandits and Shias had to sew pockets lower down on the '*pheran*', to give these soldiers a toehold. And yet, the charge against Ameer Sher is that he had tyrannised the Sunnis.

It would be impossible to make a Shia-Sunni issue of this, because though the Durrani kings were supposed to be Shia, most of their governors were Sunni or Hindu. Each governor treated his subjects according to his own lights: and the same individual could be good or bad on different occasions. For instance, George Forster wrote in 1783 about Ameer Sher, 'There is not a boatman or his wife that does not speak of this Khân with rapture and ascribe to him a once abundant livelihood.' (Most boatmen of the Dal lake are Shias.)

Within Afghânistân no one saw these as Shia-Sunni conflicts. Instead they were called Qizilbash-Afghân clashes. The Qizilbashes were believed to be Shias and (other) Afghâns mostly Sunnis. (Elsewhere in India such power struggles were, till the early 20th century, seen as an Irani vs. Turani rivalry.)

Such issues really can't be reduced to simplistic Shia-Sunni. (or Hindu-Muslim) terms. Such thinking is very 20th century. Karimdad was certainly a Sunni. He is accused of having been bad to the Shias and Hindus. On the other hand he did positive things, too. He got the Jâmâ Masjid repaired by the (Sunni) '*waqf*'. His son Âzâd Khân, too, was a Sunni. So perhaps was Nur-ud-Din, who had three stints as governor. Âzâd had three thousand Sikhs in his army. Juma Khân Durrani Halokzai was another Sunni governor. He is alleged to have prevented the Shias from mourning during Muharram. And all this in a regime headed by Shia kings. On the other hand there were Shia, Sunni and Hindu governors who were totally neutral and free of bias.

To sum up: The Durrani kings themselves displayed no bias either way. They had far too much else to do, outside Kashmir. Their absentee rule as



a whole was neither pro-Shia nor pro-Sunni. Nor was it as uniformly cruel as some historians would have it.

### **Instability: Another dynasty starts decaying**

The appointment of Vakeel Khân did not go down too well with his brothers. Bloodshed followed. For once Kabul's nominee was vanquished (by Ata Muhammad). Meanwhile, in 1801, Zaman Shah, king of Afghânistân, was defeated and blinded in Kabul. After a series of events, governor Abdullah Khân declared Kashmir independent of Kabul. However, he was defeated and killed by Kabul's new ruler, Shuja.

Once again Kashmir saw a succession of governors with brief tenures. Till, in 1806, Ata Muhammad Khân, son of Sher Muhammad Khân, came along. His period is considered the best among all Afghân governors. The structures that he got built at the venerable Tsrar-i-Sharief shrine (see also 'Budgâm') remained there till 1995. Much of the fort atop Srinagar's Hari Parbat/ Kuh-i-Maran was built by him. His was an era of general prosperity in Kashmir. In 1810, he, too, declared himself independent of Kabul.

Now, how would Muslim kings show that they were in control of a region? By getting their name read in the '*khutba*' and by minting coins in their own name. Ata Muhammad, too, got coins minted, but in the name of one of Kashmir's most popular saints, the 13th century Nur-ud-Din Wali/ Rishi, making him perhaps the only saint in the world to have coins struck in his name.

As has always happened in the history of Kashmir, well before one ruling dynasty gave way to another, members of the successor dynasty started making their presence felt.

Around this time, the Punjab, under Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh (1780-1839), was the rising, indeed the dominant, power in North India. One of Ranjit's ranking nobles, Nidhan Singh Atha, developed differences with him and defected to Ata Muhammad Khân around 1810.

In 1813, Ranjit and the Afghân governor of Peshawar, Fath Khân, ganged up against the governors of Kashmir and Attock. However, the two fell out when it came to sharing the spoils. Fath's forces took Kashmir on their own. Therefore, Fath did not consider it necessary to give Ranjit any of the booty. According to him Ranjit's army did not give him the help that he had been promised. The fact is that he rushed to enter the Valley before Ranjit's forces, led by Mohkam Chand, could. Fath captured Srinagar's Shergarhi fort and imprisoned Governor Ata Muhammad Khân, as well as the recently deposed, fugitive Afghân king Shah Shuja.

However, Mohkam Chand wrested both men from Fath's custody and took them under his wings. Now both Fath Khân and Shah Shuja's wife,



Wafa Begum, started bargaining with Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh in Lahore for these prize prisoners.

Significantly, Ata Muhammad requested the Sikh Mahârâjâ not to hand him, an Afghân Muslim, over to Fath Khân, a fellow Afghân Muslim, but to induct him into his own court instead. So much for the two-nation theory.

In any case, Wafa Begum held the trump card: *'the Kohinoor'*, which then was the world's best-known and biggest diamond. There are no prizes for guessing which side, in the Mahârâjâ's opinion, had the more convincing argument.

Meanwhile, Kashmîr was going through another period of turmoil and short-lived Afghân governorships. In 1814, Ranjit's army of ten thousand men invaded Kashmîr through Poonch. By 1819, the Sikhs had taken over all of Kashmîr. Some Kashmîrî historians refer to this as the end of Muslim rule in Kashmîr. Well, yes, for a century and a quarter.

### The Economy of Kashmîr (1586-1819)

Historian Mushtaq A. Kaw<sup>10</sup> argues that during the period in which the Mughals and Afghâns ruled Kashmîr (1586-1819) they drained away the wealth of Kashmîr to Agra/ Delhi and Kabul respectively.

*The extent of drainage of wealth:* The Afghâns, for instance, repatriated between 33 and 50% of the revenues (not GDP) of Kashmîr to Kabul. As a result the value of the Kashmîrî rupee fell to six annas: a devaluation of sixty per cent. (Kaw does not say over what period.)

The Afghân rulers' system of obtaining wealth from Kashmîr was as simple as it was coldly efficient. It was much like several modern corporate systems. The rulers in Kabul (unlike the Mughals) never visited Kashmîr. Instead, they entered into a contract with the person whom they posted as the *'Sûbédâr'* (governor) of Kashmîr. So long as the governor kept sending them the sum that he had promised, he could rule Kashmîr 'with the powers of a king,' without interference from Kabul. Or, as James Forster (1782-84, quoted by Kaw) put it, the governor could then 'execute with impunity every act of violence and exploitation'.

*Revenue Officials:* Land revenue was one of the major sources of income for the Afghâns. They increased the number of officials who collected land-revenue so that they could mop up more revenue, and faster. The early Mughals appointed only Muslims of non-Kashmîrî origin to senior positions. The later Mughals and Afghâns appointed Kashmîrîs as well. (Sukh Jiwan

10 Kaw, Dr. Mushtaq A., *The Agrarian System of Kashmîr (1586-1819)*, Aiman Publishers, Naseem Bagh, Srinagar (2001).



Mal, the Afgh  ns' second longest serving governor, was a Hindu Khatri from the Punj  b.) The ranks below the governor were called '*s  hibk  r*' and '*peshk  r*'. At this level the Afgh  ns appointed Kashmiri Pandits quite liberally; in far higher numbers than their share of the population.

*Agrarian Crisis:* Kaw says that an agrarian crisis existed in Kashmir 'since the Mughal occupation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The 18<sup>th</sup> century only witnessed the nadir of that decaying process.' An agrarian crisis, as he points out, is 'a decline in the rural population [and in the] extent of arable land, quantum of produce and yield of land revenue.'

Kaw's facts are correct. His holding non-Kashmiri rulers squarely responsible is not. An agrarian crisis existed even in 1576-79, a decade before the Mughals annexed Kashmir. In fact, several leading Kashmiri Muslims, the spiritual descendants of the great Makhdoom S  heb, invited the Mughals to take over the government of Kashmir from the Chaks precisely because of three years of continuous famine in the Valley. One of Akbar's first developmental acts was to launch a 'food for work' programme in downtown Srinagar. He spent Rs.1.09 crore constructing the N  gar-Nagar fort, providing employment to local labour in the process.

*Depopulation/outward migration:* No matter who, or what, was responsible, the fact is that the Kashmiris suffered so enormously that they started leaving the Valley in big numbers. It helps no one to put a communal colour on this (as some Hindu historians do) or to make it a Kashmiri vs Afgh  n/ Mughal issue (as some Muslim historians do). Kaw, Dr. Mridu Rai and I have separately come to the same conclusion: that 'migration was not a peculiar phenomenon with the Hindus alone' (Kaw's words).

True, there has for centuries been a substantial Kashmiri Pandit diaspora in the rest of South Asia. But there has also for equally long been a Kashmiri Muslim diaspora in places as far apart as Calcutta, Lucknow, Tibet, Turke  st  n and Iran, not to mention Lahore, the rest of Punj  b and, most important, Jamm   province. Akbar's historian, Abul Fazl, mentions the substantial presence of Kashmiri (obviously Muslim) shawl makers in Lahore from before the Mughals' take over of Kashmir.

The figures of depopulation, if true, are staggering. During Jehangir's reign (1606-22) the population of Kashmir was 19.4 lakh (1.9 million). Kaw (citing Moorcroft and other British Raj sources) says that in 1825, the population was just 8 lakh (0.8 million) and by 1835, a mere 2 lakh.

These figures, especially the last one, just can't be right. Aurangzeb's governor, Saif Kh  n, conducted a census in Kashmir around 1670. The population of Kashmir was 12,43,033 then. Did it decline by 35% in just fifty years? More importantly, in 1941 Kashmir's population was 17,28,686 (i.e. 1.7 million). That figure includes Lad  kh and Muzaffar  b  d. So, the



population of the Valley was around 15 lakh. Did it increase by more than 750-800% in just one century? Was the Dogrâ era that good for Kashmir?

Still, even after allowing for inaccuracies, the population did decline, and alarmingly. During Aurangzeb's early years, there were 5,352 villages in Kashmir. In 1709, i.e. two years after his death, only 3,429 villages were left. For once we have two sets of figures, both collected for exactly the same area by the same agency. This indicates a 36% decline in roughly as many years. This is serious. However, during the later Mughals' rule the number of villages stabilised and was more or less the same in the 1901 census. (Or, as the population figures would suggest, perhaps it went down first, only to increase again in the Dogrâ era.)

*Fall in agricultural production:* During the same period there was a huge drop in agricultural production as well. My theory is that falling agriculture forced Kashmiris to leave the valley. With fewer farmers to till the soil, agricultural production fell even further. The two trends kept reinforcing each other in a vicious cycle.

Kaw says that between 1420 and 1470 the Valley produced roughly 77 lakh (7.7 million) 'khârwârs' of paddy. 'Only eleven years after the Mughal occupation (1597), production dwindled to 60 lakh 'khârwârs', he adds. Mr. Kaw's research is impeccable. His suggestion that this had to do with 'Mughal occupation' is not. The correct thing would have been to compare the production figures of 1597 with those of 1586 (the year the Mughals took over). Or with 1576-79, when Kashmir was going through a famine so acute that, according to one contemporary source, some people ate up their own children. (I find it difficult to believe such extreme stories. My view is that people would rather migrate to a greener land than eat a human, leave alone their own children.)

Once again, regardless of what (or who) was to blame, Kashmir's agriculture was dwindling, and rapidly. By 1813, when the Afghân era was about to end, production had plummeted to 19.15 lakh 'khârwârs'. This broadly fits with the decline in population mentioned by Kaw.

*What caused this crisis?* Father Xavier, also quoted by Kaw, wrote in 1597 that Kashmir had become depopulated 'from the time that this king [Akbar] took it and governs it through his captains who tyrannise over it and bleed the people by their extortion... Now there are no cultivators on account of violence done to them.' Kaw's thesis is that things were more or less the same under the other Mughals and Afghâns as well, barring some periods of prosperity, such as Shah Jehan's.

The later Mughals, he points out, changed fifty-seven governors and deputy governors during that sixty-six year era (1707-73). This works out to roughly one year per governor. Good administration and the development of agriculture were out of the question in such a situation.



'During the early years of Akbar's reign,' Kaw says, '[the state's share of the revenue collected] was normally fixed at one-third...<sup>11</sup> Under the Afghâns, the State share was usually fixed at one-half.' After 1947, the Kashmiri farmer has had to pay only a nominal land revenue and hardly any other taxes. Yet he is quite poor. How was he able to pay the Mughals and Afghâns such a high percentage and still remain alive?

'Marauding tribesmen from Muzaffarâbâd and Poonch' looted much of what was left with Kashmiri farmers', Kaw adds. This 'enhanced the misery of the rural population.'

The Mughal era in Kashmir was hardly one of unremitting exploitation. As in the rest of India, there was considerable concern for the welfare of the people. Shah Jehan, in particular, abolished several old taxes that Kashmir's own kings had levied on the people. His grandfather, Akbar, had set the ball rolling by abolishing 55 old taxes.

Some taxes played havoc with the environment. Historian Birbal Kâchrû (1835-36) says about the '*zar-e-galât*' that in order to pay this tax, farmers had no choice but to cut down fruit trees, some of them two hundred years old, and sell the wood at the price of firewood. (The wood of the walnut tree, for instance, fetches a very handsome price when sold to furniture-makers.)

Kaw is one of many historians who list the scores of taxes that rulers from outside the Valley had levied on the people of Kashmir. What scholars like he miss is the fact that not all these were levied on everyone or at the same time. Thus, shawl weavers did not have to pay taxes meant for goldsmiths, and vice versa. Similarly, the tax on newly built gardens was levied at one stage of a person's life, the marriage tax at another and the tax on building a new house at yet another. Today there must be more than three hundred taxes in each country of the world (and in every Indian state). However, during any given year most individuals have to pay only a handful of those taxes.

Kaw rightly points out that Mughal '*jâgirdârs*' (people on whom the king had conferred large estates) were not as extortionate as their Afghân successors. The reason surely lies in the Afghân system of contracting Kashmir out to their governors, in return for an assured annual remittance to Kabul. The governors sub-contracted parts of Kashmir to '*jâgirdârs*'. The '*jâgirdârs*' sub-contracted the estates to 'local men who were mostly oppressive and inhuman,' Kaw says.

11 However, D.C. Sharma writes, 'The Mughals enforced the Kashmiri cultivators to dispense with three-fourths of their produce instead of the traditional one-half.' (*Kashmir Under the Sikhs*, 1983, Seema Publications, Delhi.)



All three types knew that their jobs were secure so long as they delivered the contracted amount to the next higher authority. Besides, each higher category sub-let parts of his fief to the highest bidder. Kaw adds, 'Muhammad Shah [one of the later Mughals] was perhaps the first emperor who legitimised the institution [of *jâgîrdâri*]... Under the Afghâns, the practice of bidding became an in-built feature of the administrative and economic fabric of Kashmir.'

'*Bégâr*' (corvée labour) has existed in Kashmir since ancient times. Kashmir's own kings, Hindu as well as Muslim, practised it. Akbar and Shah Jehan abolished '*bégâr*'. In between it re-emerged during Jehangir's reign. However, the system of payment to saffron-pluckers remained unjust by today's standards even during Akbar's time. Shah Jehan remedied the situation to an extent.

The '*fîrmân*' by which Shah Jehan abolished '*bégâr*' in saffron is quite revealing. It reads, 'At the time of gathering saffron, they [previous Mughal *sûbédârs*] carried away people with violence, so that the people may gather saffron. [The *sûbédârs*] gave to these people a little salt by way of wages. These people are much harmed on this account...'

The same '*fîrmân*' reveals that some Mughal '*sûbédârs*' 'took two '*dâms*' on every '*kharwar*' of rice. During Itiqad Khân's tenure four *dâms* were taken on each '*kharwar*'. Shah Jehan got this tax, as well as those on boatmen and fruit growers, abolished.

Kaw is at his best when he quotes documents like these, which leave no room for doubt. For here is a Mughal emperor admitting that some Mughal '*sûbédârs*' had taxed the people excessively.

The Afghâns imposed '*bégâr*' soon after they took over. Some forms of '*bégâr*' were for the public good: such as forcing people to construct a weir at Batwara or diverting the waters of the Jehlum to Maisuma. Forcing peasants to work for the Afghân war effort (against Muzaffarabad, Poonch and Kishtwâr) is something that, by today's standards, needs to be condemned. Yet, who knows, perhaps these wars were in the interest of the people of Kashmir who had for long been at the receiving end of raiders from the two former states.

Whether for a good cause or bad, peasants had to neglect their own fields because of *bégâr*.

*Famines:* Till I saw the evidence marshalled by Kaw, I had assumed that recurring famines were the main cause of Kashmir's agrarian crisis. This was based on 17<sup>th</sup> century works like *Baharistan-e-Shahi* and accounts of famine-relief works during Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh's rule.

Kaw points out that the Kashmiri peasantry 'never contemplated raising a revolt to counter the forces of coercion or extortion, as was the case elsewhere in Mughal India.'



The obvious conclusion from this would be that the extent of economic exploitation in feudal Kashm  r was much less than in other feudal states. However, obvious conclusions are not always the right ones. When I was at college, an American sociologist, who had worked with Afro-Americans, told me that only 'rising classes rebel.' I began to notice this everywhere in India in the course of my own field studies. Those who are exploited the most are often rendered too weak to have the will, energy or resources to revolt.<sup>12</sup>

## The Sikhs (1819-1846)

### The Sikh Governors: A mixed record

In 1819, Muhammad Azeem, the Afgh  n governor of Kashm  r, rushed for Kabul, along with Afgh  n troops, to fight at Q  ndah  r. He left Jabbar Kh  n in charge of Kashm  r. Mah  r  j   Ranjit Singh's general, Misr Diwan Chand, and Raja Gulab Singh of Jamm   entered the Valley through Shopian and conquered it.

Diwan Chand became the governor of Kashm  r with the title 'Zafar Jung'. There were nine other governors during the twenty-seven years of Sikh rule in Kashm  r. Only three of them were Sikh. Indeed, the last two were (Punjabi) Muslims. Ranjit did not allow his governors long tenures out of fear that they would declare themselves independent as the Afgh  ns' governor had done. Kashm  r   historians have few good things to say about most of these governors, the criticism mainly being about high taxes. Therefore, let us concentrate on the two popular ones.

Diwan Kirpa Ram (1827-31) proved to be one of the kindest and best governors of the Sikhs. He was much addicted to pleasure. But he also got the Ram B  gh and many other gardens built. He stood up to his Mah  r  j   when Ranjit demanded more taxes than were due. Humiliated by his Mah  r  j  's excessive demands he chose to retire to Hardwar (or Benares) than return to Sr  nagar and levy even higher taxes. His chief secretary was Sheikh Ghulam Muhiuddin who went on to become a governor (1842-44) himself.

Col. Mehan Singh Kumed  n (commandant), who ruled for some seven years (1834-41), was greatly respected because of his sense of justice. He was a brave soldier, with 27 war wounds on his body. He was very popular, rated by most as the best of Ranjit's governors. He remitted the tax on marriages, provided relief during a major famine and stopped charging interest on agricultural advances. He also rebuilt the Amira Kadal bridge.

<sup>12</sup> It is only when we achieve a comfortable middle class status, when we have plenty to eat and a decent assured income, that we start nursing grievances, real as well as imaginary, against other groups and communities.



However, his soldiers, all of them non-Kashmîrîs thought that his concern for the welfare of his subjects was at the expense of the army. So, they killed him.

It is easy for historians to describe Sikh rule in Kashmîr as one of oppression and high taxes. There certainly was one well-known act of cruelty in which a family of seventeen, all from Chhatabal, was burnt alive for having slaughtered a cow. However, such savagery was an exception and not the norm. Human beings can combine extremes. The same Mehan who went from '*pargana*' (district) to '*pargana*' to ensure that his Kashmîrî subjects did not starve, 'baked alive his favourite wife, the mother of his only son' (Sufî).

Each time there was a famine in Kashmîr, Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh would intervene personally. For example, he deputed an able governor like Mehan Singh to tackle the famine of 1833-34. At one stage Ranjit Singh despatched thousands of ass-loads of wheat to famine-ravaged Kashmîr for distribution from mosques and temples.

Ranjit Singh died in 1839.

### The Sikhs' Contribution

Some measures taken by the Sikh government were unpopular, though well intentioned. For instance, no Kashmîrî could go out of the Valley unless he had a passport and had paid an exit-tax of a '*tanga*'. The Kashmîrîs felt hemmed in and suffocated by this law. However, it was meant to prevent mass-migration from Kashmîr. (The 1833 famine, and the natural calamities of the five preceding years, had been so bad that almost a quarter of the population is said to have migrated to the neighbouring states—or died.)

The rationing of foodgrains was another such measure—and was almost a century ahead of its time. The Sikh government was perhaps the first in India, and one of the first in the world, to sell foodgrains (albeit only in the towns) at fixed prices through government-run ration shops. On the one hand this was extremely good for the people of Srinagar City, because the prices of food were kept in check. On the other, ration shops had a clear 'urban bias' and hurt farmers who would have received a much better price in the market because of the scarcity of foodgrains.

That the government really wanted to help is clear from the fact that it brought foodgrains and fowls over from the Punjâb, and distributed them free to the people. It also gave farmers the seeds of foodgrains and vegetables, to make the Valley self-sufficient in food. Towards the same end, they gave tax rebates to encourage the cultivation of marshy and other virgin land.

The shâwl industry (as we shall see in the chapter on the 'Handicrafts' of Kashmîr) was one of the most important sectors of the economy. The



Sikh government tried to help weavers break free of their employers, by giving them loans to set up their own businesses. If the owners of shawl factories were forced to pay better wages to the weavers, they were also encouraged to set up retail shops in other parts of India, Nepal, Tibet and the Middle East.

Marauding tribesmen from Muzaffarâbâd and Poonch, as we have just seen, would periodically plunder the Valley. The Sikhs put an end to this for good. They came down heavily on the Khâkhâs, Bâmbâs and Galwâns, and made Kashmir a safer place. For this reason, the Muslims of Sinkiang (Xinjiang) started travelling through Kashmir in greater numbers than before, on their way to Mecca for the Haj pilgrimage.

The Hîndû pilgrimage to Sîrî Amarnâth jî revived, after a gap of several centuries, during the Sikh rule. The procession would start from Amritsar (in the Punjâb) and bring thousands of Punjâbî pilgrims to Pahalgâm. The government got Hazratbal, and some other Muslim shrines repaired. D.C. Sharma adds, 'The entire staff [of these Muslim religious places] was on the payroll of the Dharmarth Department.'

The Sikhs, thus, were concerned not only about their Shia subjects (whose welfare they attended to) but Muslims as a whole. According to Sharma, 'In 1835, there were about thirty Jâgîrs and some free land grants but their number increased to 3115 in 1846. The majority of people who benefitted from these grants were Kashmîrî Muslims.'

Punjâbî culture began to influence Kashmir. The poetry of Parmânand is the most obvious example. Cotton, a fabric not native to Kashmir, became freely available in the Valley.

Above all, the Sikh era saw the coming of Western influences-and consumer goods-into Kashmir. The tourist industry came into being as some Europeans, mostly those posted in mainland India, visited Kashmir. Sharma writes, 'The first up-to-date map of Kashmir was presented to Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh by Capt. Calude Wade. Cameras, watches, barometers, binoculars, telescopes and clocks were introduced in Kashmir. People began using spectacles and Western furniture. The nucleus of the modern postal system was also created.'

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## A History of Jammû & Kashmîr

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### The Dogrâs (1846-1947)

In 1842, an armed contingent arrived in Kashmîr to restore Sikh authority after the murder of Col. Mehan. In theory, Prince Pratab, the ten-year old grandson of Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh, led it. However, Raja Gulab Singh of Jammû was its real commander. (Remember my theory about the next dynasty making its presence felt well before the demise of its precursor?)

Sher Singh was the Mahârâjâ of Punjab then. On his orders Raja Gulab appointed Sheikh Ghulam Mohiuddin the governor of Kashmîr. Sheikh Imamuddin (1845-46) later succeeded his father, Ghulam.

Raja Gulab had, in 1841, obliged the British by letting their troops pass through the Punjab on their way to Afghânistan. Ranjit had earlier turned down an identical request from the British. In January 1846, Gulab was appointed Prime Minister of the Punjab by Maharani Jindân.

After the first Sikh war of 1845-46, the British imposed an indemnity on the Sikh government. The Sikh rulers were not in a position to pay the sums demanded. Instead, they promised to let the British take over Kashmîr, Jammû, Ladâkh and Baltistan. Raja Gulab Singh stepped in and agreed to pay the indemnity.

Gulab Singh did not have all the money that was needed. He is said to have borrowed some of it from Sheikh Saudagar, whose father Maula Bakhsh had held high office under the Sikhs. (Later, Saudagar was appointed Vazir-e-Jammû.) There is reason to believe that several Kashmîrî Muslim landlords helped the Raja out by contributing a few thousand horses each.

### Gulab Singh (1846-57)

#### *The Treaty of Amritsar*

On the 9th March, 1846, the British signed the Treaty of Lahore with Raja Gulab Singh, in which he was asked to pay an indemnity of Rs.1 crore.



However, no sooner had the ink dried on the Treaty of Lahore than the British changed their mind. Lord Hardinge, the Governor General of British India, wrote to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors (of the East India Company), later that day, 'It is highly expedient that the trans-Beas portion of Kulu and Mandi, with the fertile district of Nūrpūr [sic], and the celebrated Fort Kāñgrā, the key of the Himālayas in native estimation, with its district and dependencies, should be in our possession...

'In consideration of the retention by us of the tract above described, a remission of twenty-five lakhs from the crore of rupees which Rājā Gulāb Singh would otherwise have paid will be allowed...'

Which is why just seven days later, on the 16th March, 1846, the Treaty of Amritsar was signed between the British and the Raja. This time the Raja was asked to pay Rs.75 lakhs, which he did.

In return he was given Kashmir, parts of Jammū that were not already under him, Ladākh and Baltistan. The British also recognised him as a Mahārājā, placing him, in terms of protocol and gun-salute, among the five top princes of India.

The British would later regret that 'Kashmīr was thus lost [to the British] by our own act, when it was wholly within our grasp'. Colonial historians Hutchison and Vogel, who wrote around 1930, commented, 'It is easy to be wise after the event, but at the time of transfer there was no one who imagined that within three years the Panjab would become a British Province. On the contrary, the transfer of the hill tracts to Raja Gulab Singh was regarded at the time as a masterly stroke of policy.'

Raja Lal Singh, Vazir of Lahore, instructed Sheikh Imamuddin, Governor of Kashmir, to oppose Gulab's take-over. Imamuddin routed the Dogrā contingent with the help of the Bambas. Mahārājā Gulab Singh contacted the British. They agreed to help him. Imamuddin left the Valley on hearing the news and surrendered before Sir Henry at Behram Galla. The people of Kashmir were happy at the exit of this tyrant.

The new Mahārājā took steps to ensure that shawl weavers got a better price for their shawls than in the past, by reducing the importance of intermediaries called *kar khāndars*. He also started a system of providing cheap rations to the landless. He tried to minimise the harshness of *begār* (unpaid, corvée labour).

Gulab expanded his kingdom rapidly, as we shall see in the volumes on Jammū and Ladākh. He died in 1857. British surveyors carried out the Trigonometrical Survey of J&K with aid given by Gulab and his successor, Mahārājā Ranbir.



**Ranbir Singh (1857-1885)**

Mahârâjâ Ranbir Singh added Gilgit to the state. He was quite popular with the people. Despite the general poverty of Kashmîr, food was cheap and abundant. A rupee could buy 90 lb. (pounds) of rice or 12 lb. of meat or 60 lb. of milk. Fruit and fish were available almost free: it certainly was uneconomical to sell them. Crime was low because punishment was harsh and responsibility was fixed on officials. Drunkenness was unknown.

The Mahârâjâ spent substantial public funds on education and the repair of paths. On the other hand he was quite indifferent to the insanitary conditions of Srînagar. Land revenue was three times as high as in British Punjab. For that reason, people did not cultivate wastelands. Other taxes were high and many.

In 1877, there was a severe famine in Kashmîr, which resulted in several deaths. Part of the fault was that of the land revenue system that forbade harvesting till revenue was collected in kind. Ranbir was quick to realise this. Therefore, he modified the system. He also introduced the cultivation of grapes and cash crops like hops, in order to give Kashmîrî farmers additional sources of income.

Ranbir also started work on the Banihal cart (BC) road, which is now the Jammû-Srînagar national highway (NH-1A). He also started work on a similar road between Srînagar and Rawalpindi. The Mahârâjâ encouraged litterateurs, many of them Muslim, along the lines of Akbar's model. (For his contribution to the silk industry, see the chapter on 'Handicrafts'.)

**Sir Pratap Singh (1885-1925)**

Mahârâjâ Pratap's father and grandfather, Ranbir and Gulab respectively, had resisted the posting of a British Resident in the state. Mahârâjâ Pratap, too, opposed the idea but eventually had to give in. The British conspired with the Mahârâjâ's brothers, Ram Singh and Amar Singh, and suspended his powers to rule.

In 1891, the Mahârâjâ's forces conquered the states of Hunza, Nagar and Yasin, north of Gilgit. The state's northern frontier now went all the way to the Hindu Kush, where it met Russia. In the north east, in Karakoram, the state bordered China.

*Problems with the Raj:* The British, in their paranoia, accused Pratap of secretly being in touch with Russia with a view to destabilising British rule in India. So, in 1889, they forced him to issue an *irshâd* (voluntary resignation). He was made to transfer power to a five-man Council, which included his two brothers as well as Pt. Suraj Koul, Pt. Bhag Ram and a European.



After prolonged litigation, the Mahârâjâ's powers were restored, partly in 1905 and wholly in 1920. In the process, a British Resident was imposed on the State. The Mahârâjâ was obliged to seek the Resident's advice on important matters.

*Development:* A historic revenue settlement was conducted in the Valley, under the supervision of the legendary Sir W.R. Lawrence. This gave peasants considerable security of tenure.

The Hindu College, which had been founded in Srînagar by Annie Besant, a British scholar and social reformer, in 1905, was taken over by the Mahârâjâ's government. (It was later renamed the Sri Pratap College.) Pratap gave Jammû the Prince of Wales (later G.M. Science) College. Many schools were established. A technical institute (named after Amar Singh) was started in Srînagar. The Mahârâjâ set up major hospitals in Srînagar and Jammû to improve health standards. It was he who introduced the supply of filtered drinking water in these two cities.

Among the many developmental works to Mahârâjâ Pratap's credit were a model agriculture farm near Srînagar's Shalimar Bâgh, the Sialkot-Jammû railway line and the Mohora power plant. Municipal self-government was introduced. Srînagar and Jammû were given municipalities, especially to oversee sanitation. Rivers were dredged. To ensure that there was sufficient water in the Jehlum during a drought, the Mahârâjâ got the Chhatabal weir constructed.

Prof. G. Mohi-ud-din Shah writes that Pratap's 'greatest achievement' was 'the building of two trunk roads... [i]The Jehlum Valley Road [was] 132 miles long [and] connected the Valley with Kohala... [ii]The Banihal Cart Road... connected the Valley with Jammû [and was] 203 miles in length.' ('Forty Years Rule of Mahârâjâ Pratap Singh', *Kashmîr Times*, Jammû, 27 October, 1996.)

It is difficult to find a regional bias in the Mahârâjâ's economic programme. When he modernised sericulture, too, it was in both Srînagar and Jammû.

However, some laws were discriminatory. For instance, only Hindu Rajputs were allowed to carry firearms. Muslim literacy figures were abysmal: as low as 1.6%, according to Prem Nath Bazaz. (Literacy among Dogrâ Hindus, on the other hand, was merely terrible.)

The Valley remained poor even though a lot of very good work was done. *Begâr* was abolished. A High Court of Judicature was created.

*Political Events:* In 1907, Urdu replaced Persian as the language of the Dogrâ court. Many Muslims and Persian-knowing Kashmîrî Pandits opposed this. They saw Urdu as a 'Punjabi' language being imposed on them. To an extent they were right. Thousands of Kashmîrîs, Muslim as well as Pandit, who knew no Urdu, were now without a job. On the other hand



Punjabi Hindus, who were proficient in Urdu, thronged the state—and thrived. (How roles get reversed. Since 1947, Urdu has been seen as a Muslim language. And almost all Punjabi Hindus have since insisted that their mother tongue is Hindi.)

A major agitation began against the imposition of Urdu and against the influx of Punjabis. The local people, Muslim as well as Hindu, Kashmîrî as well as Dogrâ, were worried that outsiders would overwhelm them in their own state. This led to the enactment of the so-called 'state subject' legislation. Thenceforth, only state subjects could purchase land or get a government job in the State. (It is wrongly believed that this legislation is the result of the autonomy agreed upon for the state in 1950 under Article 370 of the Constitution of India.)

The freedom of speech and expression was extremely restricted in the Valley. Therefore, many Kashmîrîs published their newspapers from Lahore. In 1907, Mahârâjâ Pratap denied Munshi Muhammad Din Fauq permission to bring out his newspaper, the *Kashmîrî*, from Srinagar. The Mahârâjâ allowed only four newspapers to be published during his forty-year reign. Three of them were from Jammû. These were the *Dogrâ Gazette*, the *Neeti Patra* and the *Ranbir*. The fourth was the Moravian Mission's *Ladâkh Photiyan*.

Meanwhile, Mahatma Gandhi's support to the Khilafat movement in Turkey proved very popular among the Muslims. However, it left the others cold.

*The Welfare of the Muslims:* Prof. G.M. Shah writes, 'Mahârâjâ Pratap Singh... took the following measures for promoting education among his illiterate Muslim subjects:

'[A] grant-in-aid [of] Rs.3,000 per year was sanctioned in favour of [the] Islâmîa High School, Srinagar... A number of other Muslim schools were also recognised and given sufficient grants. Scholarships amounting to Rs.3,200 per annum were given to deserving Muslim students... Muslim scholars were attached to almost all the primary schools for teaching [the] Quran and theology. *Maktabas*, single teacher schools, were also recognised and given grants.

'...[In] 1916, the Mahârâjâ ordered a commission to be appointed to look into the causes of educational backwardness of the Muslims... and to make recommendations for the betterment of this community. Accordingly, one Mr. Sharp, then educational commissioner in British India, was appointed [the Head of the commission]. The Mahârâjâ accepted all [of Sharp's] recommendations. The state officials, however, were not honest in implementing these recommendations... This caused a lot of resentment and frustration among the Muslims.'



*Petitioning the Viceroy:* In the summer of 1924, the workers of the Silk Factory, Srinagar, started an agitation for higher wages and against the corruption of some non-Muslim officials. Their leader, called "King", was imprisoned. Later, educated Muslims, led by Kh. Sâd-ud-din Shawl, presented a memorandum to the British Viceroy in India, when he visited Srinagar in October 1924. The signatories, including the two Mîr Waizes (religious heads), proposed that the peasants should be made the owners of the land that they cultivated, that certain mosques be given back to the Muslims, that more Muslims should be employed in government jobs, and that the Muslims should receive more and better education.

This memorandum became the forerunner of the subsequent Muslim/National Conference, as well as of the Quit Kashmir movement.

*Biased Courtiers:* 'Biased courtiers poisoned the mind of the Mahârâjâ... against the memorialists,' Prof. Shah writes. 'The result was that the Mahârâjâ ordered Kh. Sâd-ud-din Shawl to be exiled from the state, debarred Mîr Waiz Ahmadullah and Mîr Waiz Hamdâni from attending the Darbar, and stopped the jagir of an influential jagirdar, Kh. Hassan Naqashbandi...

'The Mahârâjâ soon... realised that he had committed a Himâlayan blunder in antagonising his Muslim subjects... [T]he feeling of repentance on this account told upon his health to such an extent that he fell ill and could not recover... When he felt that his end was near he called Raja Hari Singh... to his bedside and said... in a very subdued voice, "Please take special care of my subjects because they are very poor and innocent."

## **Hari Singh (1925-1947) and the beginning of popular politics**

### *The Mahârâjâ*

Mahârâjâ Hari Singh was sensitive to the changing times. On the day of his coronation he announced several reforms: zamindars (big farmers and major land owners) were given greater rights to the land that they held; they could now cultivate some kinds of government lands; female infanticide and early marriages were to be discouraged; and more schools, hospitals and educational institutions would be opened. He later banned polyandry in Ladâkh (a reform that remained mostly on paper) and outlawed *rum* (bride-price) among the Sudans of Poonch.

In 1929, the Mahârâjâ constituted a High Court, building on what Pratap had begun.

*An Indian Federation:* As a young man, the Mahârâjâ envisioned an Indian Federation.

*Relations with the British:* The Mahârâjâ compelled the British to remove the Resident whom they had posted in the state. He thus made amends for his predecessor, and brother, Pratap's capitulation. However, he had other



troubles with the British. They weren't at all amused when, at the Round Table Conference, he suggested that India be treated as an equal in the Commonwealth. Besides, he asked them to install in British India a more democratic political and administrative system than was then in place.

### *Sheikh Abdullah and Popular Politics*

The reign of Mahârâjâ Hari Singh coincided with the beginning of popular politics in Kashmîr, and the rise of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah.

The Sheikh (born 1905) earned an M.Sc. from Aligarh and was also educated at Lahore. On his return to the State in 1930, he was appointed 'science master' in a state-run school. He resigned the post a few months later to take to full-time political work. Like at least two generations of Kashmîrîs, he was deeply inspired by the tallest Urdu poet and philosopher of the age, Allama Sir Muhammad Iqbal, who was a Lahore-based ethnic Kashmîrî.

In 1929, Sir Alin Bannerji resigned from the Mahârâjâ's council, of which he had been a senior minister. This was the other major influence on the Sheikh. Sir Alin went over to Lahore and condemned the widespread illiteracy, poverty and 'injustices' that were to be found in the state. The Mahârâjâ's government tried to contradict Sir Alin's statement. This prompted the Sheikh to publish a statement in the Lahore-based *Muslim Outlook*, pointing out how the Mahârâjâ's rebuttals were wrong.

The Mahârâjâ returned from England in 1931. He noticed that Kashmîr was tense. One Abdul Qadeer from Uttar Pradesh had delivered a speech at the Jâmâ Masjid, Srînagar, asking the people to launch a jihad against the Mahârâjâ's government. He was jailed for sedition.

The Mahârâjâ called seventeen representatives of the people for negotiations to settle their demands. The Sheikh and Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Shah represented Kashmîr. Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas and Sardar Gauhar Rehman came from Jammû and Peer Hussain-ud-Din Banday from Muzaffarâbâd. The talks did not yield any results. Instead, many of the invited leaders organised public agitations in different parts of the state. Mufti Zia-ud-Din went to Sialkot, Lahore and other Punjabi towns, exhorting the people to help the Kashmîrîs in their freedom struggle against the Mahârâjâ.

The Mahârâjâ's government arrested all seventeen leaders. This incensed the people even further. Shopkeepers shut their shops and all public activity was brought to a halt for the next seventeen days. The government realised the gravity of the situation and released the arrested leaders.

The 13th July, 1931, changed Kashmîrî politics forever. Abdul Qadeer was being tried for sedition in the courtyard of Srînagar's Central Jail. Several Kashmîrîs tried to force their way inside while the case was being heard. The police fired on the crowd, killing seven of them near the jail and ten more at the Jâmâ Masjid during the burial of the first seven.



Overnight, the Sheikh emerged as the undisputed leader of the Kashmiris. He protested against restrictions on public gatherings and processions. The Mahârâjâ's government did not take kindly to this. On the 21st September, 1931, it imprisoned the Sheikh in Srinagar's Hari Parbat Fort. This was the Sheikh's first imprisonment as an individual. (Thereafter, he would spend a fifth of his fifty-year political career in jails. The Dogrâ rulers locked him up for two years and nine months. After this great Indian freedom fighter opted to become a citizen of India he was jailed for another thirteen years and nine months.)

In 1932, the Mahârâjâ appointed a commission of inquiry to look into the grievances of the people. It was headed by B.J. Glancy. Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas was one of its members. The Commission revealed that though the Muslims constituted the majority of the state's population, there were relatively few Muslims in government service. This was attributed to the fact that there weren't enough Muslims available with the required educational qualifications. The Commission, which had two Hindu and two Muslim members, recommended that the government should launch a special drive to recruit Muslims to the civil services, and, in the case of Muslim candidates, relax the educational qualifications required. The Mahârâjâ accepted these recommendations in principle.

### *A Mass Movement*

The Sheikh started a mass movement to get the recommendations implemented at the earliest. In 1931, the Muslims of Kashmir formed a political party, the Muslim Conference, with the Sheikh as its head. Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas was a notable member. However, very shortly after that the elites of Srinagar city grouped themselves into the Âzâd Conference, with Mîr Waiz Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Shah as its head. The hereditary institution of the Mîr Waiz is based in Srinagar's most popular mosque, the Jâmâ Masjid. The Mîr Waiz has a following that runs into hundreds of thousands. Most of the older families of Srinagar owe allegiance to this institution.

Over the centuries the established middle-class of Srinagar had few, if any, matrimonial relations with rural folk. The Sheikh represented the rural people who, in 1931, were around seventy percent of the population of the Valley. (Srinagar city by itself has generally accounted for 20-22% of the population of Kashmir.) Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas spoke for Jammû's Punjabi/Dogri-speaking Muslims who were quite well represented in the Mahârâjâ's government and army. The three leaders had totally different social bases. A split was inevitable. It has persisted ever since. (The ideological successors of the Âzâd Conference have variously been the Awami Action Committee, the Janata Party (yes, the party that ruled India from 1977 to 1980), the Muslim United Front and the All Parties Hurriyat Conference.)



The Muslim Conference (MC) developed other schisms, too. In 1937, the Ahmediyas left the party. The followers of Mîr Waiz Hamadâni (a group totally different from the followers of Mîr Waiz Yusuf) left the MC the same year. Meanwhile, the left wing of the MC, the Young Men's Association, grouped itself under the Sheikh to lead a secular and socialist movement.

The Sheikh soon drew close to the Indian National Congress, which had a similar secular ideology. Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and P.N. Bazaz helped bring the two together. (The Congress led India's freedom struggle against the British. It later ruled independent India from 1947 to '77, 1980 to '89 and 1991 to '96.) In 1935, at a public meeting, Dr. Kitchlew said, "Kashmîr is a part of India." The Sheikh applauded Dr. Kitchlew's statement. He met Congress leaders Pandit Nehru and Khân Abdul Ghaffar Khân at the Lahore Railway Station. (Pt. Nehru would later become the first Prime Minister of independent India.)

### NC vs. MC

On the 11th June, 1939, the Sheikh converted the Muslim Conference (MC) into the National Conference (NC). This decision was taken at a special session chaired by Khwaja Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq. Only 3 of the 176 delegates of the MC voted against. Hindus and Sikhs started joining the NC. Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas was left with the Jammû wing of the MC.<sup>1</sup>

H.A. War (3) best sums up this parting of ways, 'The Muslim Conference and National Conference were at daggers drawn against each other under the notorious labels of bakrâ (goat) and sher (lion) [respectively]... NC was a mass party [i.e. a party of the masses] and enjoyed blind popularity [i.e. the blind support of the people] in Kashmîr Valley, whereas Muslim Conference led by Maulvi Yusuf Shah was confined to 13 muhallas [neighbourhoods] of downtown Srinagar.'

Mr. Sadiq was a leftist and a secularist. The NC sent him to Lahore where he effectively scuttled any chances that there might have been of a tie-up between the NC and the Pakistan Movement.

The Sheikh also set up the Muslim Auqaf Trust and took control of the management of the Hazratbal shrine.

Regarding later events, War (3) adds, '[The MC] showed pro-Mahârâjâ leanings and confined their activities to anti-NC programmes. However, when it became certain in 1946 that India would be partitioned and Pakistan would come into existence as a Muslim state, the MC started raising slogans

1 P.G. Rasool says that Chaudhary Abbas was party to the conversion of the MC into NC but left 'later when the Sheikh behaved as an instrument of the Congress party. I have no problem in accepting this version, except that two authorities, including Prof. Rashid, say that the Chaudhary separated from the NC in 1939.



in favour of Pakistan and ultimately passed a resolution [on the 19th July, 1947] in favour of the accession of J&K State to Pakistan.'

### **Pt. Nehru, Mr. Jinnah and other guests**

Pt. Nehru toured Srinagar in June 1940, at the NC's invitation. According to the *Regional Gazetteer*, '(The Indian leader) Sardar Patel very often remarked that Pandit ji loves Kashmir more than India. For this gesture, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru earned a great fame in Kashmir. In June 1940, he was given such a reception which will be remembered for all years to come.'

Mr. M.A. Jinnah visited Kashmir in June 1944. (Mr. Jinnah later founded Pakistan. His party and he believed that the Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations.) The Muslims of the Valley gave Mr. Jinnah a mixed reception. The *Regional Gazetteer* puts it more strongly, 'The people... made his stay in the valley very uncomfortable. The same fate was meted out [by the Kashmiri Pandits] to V.D. Savarkar, leader of the Hindu Mahasabha'.

There are several accounts in circulation in Kashmir about Mr. Jinnah's historic visit. They reflect the ambivalence that has prevailed in Kashmir about Pakistan and the two-nation theory from the 1940s to this day. P.G. Rasool points out that 'Mr. Jinnah was greeted enthusiastically.' He is right. The Sheikh did not join Mr. Jinnah's political group but he had, in the finest of Kashmiri traditions, been very courteous to the visitor. What Mr. Rasool has chosen to slur over is what happened at Mr. Jinnah's meeting in Bâramullâ. A prominent local family had arranged a fine reception for Mr. Jinnah. Members of the NC, notably the legendary Maqbool Sherwani, held a demonstration against Mr. Jinnah. They shouted slogans in favour of the Sheikh. The organisers of the meeting rushed towards Sherwani, who ran into Khânpora, which is near the river. There he got into a boat and asked the boatman to start paddling. When the boat was half way to the other bank Mr. Jinnah's supporters reached the Khânpora bank. They ordered the boatman to bring the boat back. At this Sherwani jumped into the river, swam across and went straight to the residence of the Superintendent of Police for protection.

According to a version that was current in Kashmir till 1989, some residents of Bâramullâ had forced a garland made of shoes on Mr. Jinnah to show their aversion to his ideology. I have interviewed several people to ascertain the truth. The sequence of events given above indicates that the anti-Jinnah demonstrators never got close enough to him to be able to garland him. Nor was there enough time for them to do so before they were chased away.



H.A. War (3) has a different take on this event. Now a historian, Hilal Ahmed War was one of the founders of the Muslim United Front of 1986. He writes, 'NC workers, led by Gh. Mohiuddin Qarra, resorted to rowdy demonstrations against Mr. Jinnah and tried to put a garland of shoes around the neck of Mr. Jinnah (RA). They even made the shameful demonstration of their male sexual organs towards Mr. Jinnah.' [This brandishing of 'male sexual organs' by local mobs at important visitors has twice cost Kashmîr dear. H.A. War (3) adds, "The reaction of Mr. Jinnah (RA) came later when he said that the 'Quit Kashmîr Movement' was a movement of renegades and rowdyism." Four decades later, in 1983, the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, addressed a political rally at Srinagar's Iqbal Park. Word went around that some local ruffians had waved their 'male sexual organs' at her during that rally. Her reaction was equally fierce. Within weeks the newspapers started predicting that New Delhi would dismiss the state government, then headed by the National Conference. This came true a few months later.]

Muslim communalists, as well as Hindu communalists like Sharda, attacked the Sheikh. Pt. Nehru's daughter, Mrs Indira Gandhi, and the liberal scion of a prominent industrial family, Mridula Sarabhai, spent the summers of 1944 and 1945 with the Abdullah family. Mridula ji came as Mahatma Gandhi's emissary to give a fillip to the anti-Mahârâjâ freedom movement in the state.

### Quit Kashmîr

In 1944, the NC prepared the Naya (new) Kashmîr document, which would later become its manifesto for the equitable governance and development of the State. It was presented to the Mahârâjâ at a reception organised near the Mujahid Manzil, Srinagar, on his return from a tour of Central Asia.

In 1946, the Sheikh started the Quit Kashmîr movement, against the unrepresentative government of the Mahârâjâ. According to H.A. War (2), 'The people of J&K.... were [through this movement] demanding that [the] Mahârâjâ of J&K should act as a hereditary constitutional monarch like [the] British King and introduce responsible democratic government, elected by popular franchise.'

The Sheikh was arrested for treason. Pt. Nehru entered the state to support the Sheikh. The Mahârâjâ arrested Nehru, too. H.A. War adds, 'In this movement [the] Muslim League of Mohammed Ali Jinnah (RA) remained indifferent and aloof.'

The line-up, thus, was the democrats versus the monarchists. It was certainly not the Hiñdûs vs. the Muslims. Mahâtma Gândhî and Pt. Jawâharlâl Nehrû (and countless Kashmîrî Hiñdûs and Sikhs) supported Sheikh Abdullâh



against their so-called fellow-Hi  nd  , Mah  r  j   Hari Singh. On the other hand, as War (3) points out, '[The Muslim Conference] showed pro-Mah  r  j   leanings.' As we shall see, Mr. Jinnah, too, was far more comfortable with the Hi  nd   Mah  r  j   than with the Sheikh, who was supposed to be his co-religionist. And that is how not only undivided India but the entire world has always been. Religious identities matter only during a conflict. In the long run friendships and enmities are rooted in interests and ideas.

The Muslim Conference was unnerved by the NC's popularity. The MC decided to launch a struggle, which one of its top leaders leaked to Prime Minister R.C. Kak. The weakness of the MC, led by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, was exposed in October 1946, when the Chaudhary courted arrest. (According to Mr. P.G. Rasool, the Chaudhary was arrested for violating prohibitory orders. Either way, several hundred members of the two parties were jailed till well after the 15th August 1947.)

## Accession to India: 1947-49

### *India/Pakistan/Independence*

By December 1946, two things were clear: i) India was about to become independent of the British, and ii) British India would be divided into two countries when the British left: a Pakistan that was avowedly Muslim and an India that strove to be secular. Pakistan was to become independent on the 14th August that year and India, acting on astrological advice, a day later.

India's 565 princely states could join either of these two successor states. The Indian Independence Act, 1947, did not give them a third option (such as joining neither or staying independent).

The Mah  r  j   and his PM (R.C. Kak) toyed with the idea of independence. The Sheikh favoured secular India. However, labour leaders like Pt. Prem Nath Bazaz wanted Kashmir to accede to Pakistan.

According to the magazine *Communalism Combat*, '[In May 1947] the Akhil Rajya Hindu Sabha, under the leadership of the state RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, a right-wing Hindu nationalist organisation], Prem Nath Dogr  , called Kashmir a Hindu state, ruled by a Hindu Mah  r  j  . It passed a resolution, "a Hindu state should not join secular India". They did not mind a theocratic Pakistan.

Mah  r  j   Hari Singh wanted his kingdom to remain independent of both countries. His son, Dr. Karan Singh, would later recall, 'My father was considering whether to join either of the two countries—India or Pakistan—or remain an independent entity having equal relations with both countries...



We were a Hindu family which ruled a Muslim population state.' (*State Times*, Jammû, the 29th October, 1999.)

Most people wrongly assume that kings and military dictators act the way they do because of their personal dispositions and whims. Indeed, in routine matters they enjoy greater autonomy from public opinion than do elected governments. However, when it comes to vital issues they can ignore the wishes of their subjects only at their own peril. And the future of the State was an extremely important issue.

### Pakistan's Offer

Lala Mehar Chand Mahajan<sup>2</sup> would later recall that leaders of the pro-Pakistan Muslim Conference told him that he 'should advise the Mahârâjâ to accede to Pakistan and if that was done they would always remain loyal to him and would see that he remained an independent Ruler inside the Pakistan State. The Mehtar of Chitral and the Mirs of Hunza and other petty chieftains continued to send telegrams to His Highness suggesting accession to Pakistan and swearing loyalty to the Mahârâjâ if this was done.'

On the other hand, the National Conference, which represented the overwhelming majority of the people of Kashmîr, felt differently. Mahajan adds, 'The leaders of National Conference, however, desired accession to India.'

As I said, the issue was democracy vs monarchy, not Hinduism vs Islâm.

Mr. Jinnah understood the Mahârâjâ's dilemma. To quote Mahajan, '[Mr.] Jinnah had openly proclaimed that legally speaking the question of accession depended entirely on the choice of the Ruler and the people of the State had no right to question his choice [and that the Mahârâjâ] need consult nobody in the matter of accession of the State, that he should not care a fig for the National Conference or Sheikh Abdullah, that Pakistan would not touch a hair of his head, nor require him to delegate any of his powers to the people of the State. After accession to Pakistan he could continue as the absolute Ruler of the State.'

Under the circumstances, the Mahârâjâ's indecision was understandable. So, on the 12th August, 1947, he sent letters to the prospective governments of both India and Pakistan inviting them to accept a 'Standstill Agreement (with the Govt. of Jammû & Kashmîr)... on all matters on which there exist(ed) arrangements with the outgoing British India Government'. Three days later, on the 15th August, Pakistan accepted the proposal. India did not.

2 Mahajan was an eminent jurist. He became the Prime Minister of the State on the 15th October, 1947.



India's main objection was that the Mah  r  j  's government did not represent the people of the state. This was especially so because the people had, under the leadership of the Sheikh, been in revolt against the Mah  r  j   since May 1946. Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas and the MC, too, had risen.

The Monckton papers, now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, reveal that Kak was in regular touch with the Nizam of Hyderabad, in an effort to keep Kashmir independent. Finding the Nizam equally reluctant to join India, Kak tried to rope him into a joint front. Lord Wavell described Kak as 'thoroughly unscrupulous'. One Swami Sant Dev also fuelled the Mah  r  j  's inclination to keep the state independent.

### **Trouble in Poonch**

Till early 1947, a relative of the Mah  r  j   ruled Poonch (Jamm  ). According to Prof. Rashid, trouble began in April 1947, when the Mah  r  j   removed the Raja of Poonch and 'imposed heavy taxes on the people of Poonch, who hesitated to pay. The Mah  r  j  's government ordered its troops to realize the taxes from the people forcibly. There was great resentment [among] the people against the Mah  r  j  's government.'

This resentment turned into a pro-Pakistan sentiment when, a few months later, that country was born. Prof. Rashid says that in Poonch there were demonstrations in favour of Pakistan. The Mah  r  j  's government reacted by imposing Martial Law on Poonch. His troops 'tried to crush' the pro-Pakistan sentiment through the use of force. Rashid writes that the people of Poonch 'took up arms against the Mah  r  j  's troops. [They] were supported by their kith and kin and Muslims from across the border [in] Pakistan who supplied them arms to fight against the Mah  r  j  's government and troops. On this issue relations between the government of J&K and Pakistan started to deteriorate and [grew] bitter' by the day.

### **The Partition of India: Kashmir stays calm**

On the 14th August, 1947, Pakistan was sliced away from India. Till then the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs had lived together quite peacefully for several centuries. Before the 1890s, rioting between these communities was almost unheard of anywhere in India. When it did take place the causes were the usual land, money and women, never religion. In the first half of the 20th century there were indeed several murderous riots between the Hindu-Sikhs on one side and the Muslims on the other. However, almost all these riots took place in a handful of cities in British India. Barring a few incidents, the Princely States of India were mostly free of 'communal riots.' So were the villages of British India and even urban South India.



The partition of India changed much of that. The year 1947 saw considerable violence between the Muslims and the Hindu-Sikhs. People were still reluctant to kill persons belonging to the other religion whom they knew personally. Instead they would travel in murderous groups to faraway villages and towns to avenge violence against their community that had been reported (rumoured, actually) from some distant part of the sub-continent.

Which community started it all? The right wing of each community blames the other. My finding is that majority communities were the aggressors. They would normally pounce on the minorities. Even that took place only where the minorities lived in large enough numbers to provide political or economic competition. The Muslims were in a majority in West Punjab.

In Jammû and Kashmîr, the Hindus dominated some parts of Jammû, Kathuâ and Reasi-Udhampur, and the Muslims the Rājouri-Poonch-Mirpur belt and Dodâ. So when violence started in British-ruled Punjab, neighbouring Jammû province retaliated. Besides, the British started fanning anti-Mahārājâ sentiments among the Muslims in many parts of the state.

This resulted in communal riots in Mirpur and Kotli (both now in POK). In 1947, these riots developed into a full-blown revolt against the Mahārājâ. The minorities migrated to areas where they felt safer. In parts of Jammû district, Reasi, Udhampur and Kathuâ, too, there were communal riots. In both cases the minorities were slaughtered.

Village after village in Jammû province was ethnically cleansed, and brutally. In both directions.

The bloodbath of November 6, 1947, was the last straw. It provoked the mass exodus of Muslims from the Hiñdû-dominated parts of Jammû. Hiñdûs from the Muslim-majority belt migrated en masse to the Hiñdû areas. (Since then a little less than a third (30%) of the population of Jammû province has been Muslim. In Rājouri, Poonch and Dodâ districts and in parts of Udhampur district, the Muslims are still in an overwhelming majority.)

Pākistân's ethnic cleansing was, of course, far more thorough. That country ensured that more than 99.5% of the Hiñdû, Sikh, Jain, Christian and Pārsî (Zoroastrian) population of what is now Pākistân was driven to India.

Kashmîr was untouched by all of this. The only sound that disturbed the calm of the Valley was a slogan, 'What does the Lion of Kashmîr want?' The reply, also shouted back, would be, 'Unity between the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.'

Led by Sheikh Abdullah, Kashmîr protected its Hindu-Sikh minorities. Gandhiji said that he saw 'a ray of hope' in Kashmîr.



### Restlessness in Pakistan

Meanwhile, some influential sections in Pakistan were getting restless because Kashmir did not seem to be coming their way. *The Dawn*, Karachi, (24 Aug, 1947) warned, 'Should Kashmir fail to join Pakistan the gravest possible trouble will inevitably ensue.' (This has since become a pattern. After every five or ten years the Pakistani establishment threatens to wage war on India—since 1998, nuclear war—if Pakistan does not get Kashmir.)

Till then the state would import salt, petrol and several kinds of foodstuffs and consumer goods through roads that were now in Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan sealed off all highways leading into Kashmir. Rashid writes, '[Pakistan] permitted a steady and increasing strangulation of [these] supplies... [in order] to force the hands of the Mahârâjâ to [agree to an] accession [of the state to] Pakistan.'

The Indian National Congress tried to win Hari Singh over through the Mahârâjâ of Kapurthala and influential citizens like Col. Kaul. Mahatma Gandhi was able to persuade the Mahârâjâ to remove Kak. This was the first sign that the Mahârâjâ was veering away, albeit reluctantly, from the independence option.

The Sheikh was released from prison on the 9th September.

On the 1st October, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah addressed a large gathering at Hazuri-Bâgh, Srinagar. A section of the crowd asked for Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. However, the Sheikh said, 'Till the last drop of my blood I will not believe in the two-nation theory.' Elsewhere he said, 'Kashmiris would rather die following the footsteps of Gandhiji than accept the two-nation theory.'

### The 'tribal' raid

Pakistan, on its part, sent Major Shah to argue its case in Srinagar. The Major was the son-in-law of Mr. Abdul Rashid, Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court. Maj. Shah met Maj. Gen Janak Singh, the new Prime Minister of the State, and Mr. R.L. Batra, the Deputy PM, in October 1947. He told them that it was in the best interests of the state to accede to Pakistan. They did not agree with Maj. Shah.

The Government of Pakistan translated the restlessness of its establishment into violations of the Standstill Agreement. Prof. A. Rashid writes, '[Muslim] League leaders of West Punjab and Frontier Province, in connivance with the government of Pakistan, organized and abetted with a supply of arms, the tribals of [the Frontier] Province to invade Kashmir state through Sialkote [in Jammû] and Domel in Kashmir through the Jehlum valley road in order to get the Mahârâjâ dethroned.'



The Mahârâjâ protested to the Pakistani Prime Minister on the 18th October.

Four days later, on the 22nd October, Pakistan responded by sending thousands of tribesmen into the state. They were under the command of Maj. (Retd.) Khurshid Anwar. The tribals were controlled and given arms by the Pakistani army. (At the time, India put the number of the raiders at 1,00,000. Even writers like Brian Cloughley agree that there were at least fifteen or twenty thousand.) The very next day the Pakistanis took Muzaffarâbâd with ease.

On the 24th October, they overran several places near Srinagar and Bâramullâ. The Mahârâjâ had thitherto been trying to keep the state independent of both India and Pakistan. Now he realised that this 'third option' was no longer available. He asked his Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Batra, to rush to Delhi to ask India to send in its army. The Government of India did not oblige. It wanted some kind of a constitutional link with Kashmîr before it sent in its troops.

The next day the Pakistanis killed Brig. Rajinder Singh of the state's army. On hearing of the Brigadier's death and other reverses, the Mahârâjâ left Srinagar for Jammû.

The same day the Sheikh flew to Delhi. Also on the 25th, V.P. Menon came to Srinagar to negotiate the accession of Jammû & Kashmîr to the Union of India. Mr. Menon was Secretary to the Government of India, States Department.

### **Cruelties in Bâramullâ**

The next day, the tribals captured Bâramullâ town.

The Rt. Rev. Msgr. George Shanks, then Prefect Apostolic of Jammû & Kashmîr, was in Bâramullâ with the sisters of the Missionaries of Mercy. He told All India Radio, 'Early morning October 27, 1947, when I celebrated the Community Mass for the Sisters, shouts of the tribesmen and sounds of gunshots could be heard all around.'

Robert Trumbull of the *New York Times* described what followed thus, '... one party of Masud tribesmen immediately scaled the walls of the St. Joseph Fransiscan Convent compound, and stormed the Convent Hospital and the little church. Four nuns and Colonel Dykes and his wife were shot immediately. The raiders' greed triumphed over their blood lust.'

Mrs. Dykes and her husband were in the hospital because they had just delivered a baby. The raiders killed a Hindu patient as well. Mother Teresalina had come all the way from her native Spain to serve the Kashmîri people. She jumped in front of the Mother Superior when the raiders went over to kill the Superior. The raiders pumped three bullets into Teresalina. Her



sacrifice was in vain. The Superior, too, was killed. So were Sister Philomena, a lay nurse, and Mr. Baretto, the husband of the resident lady doctor.

Officers of the Pakistan Army led the raiders. Some of them were more humane. One of them, Major Yaqoob, stepped into the convent when one of his soldiers was trying to steal, at dagger point, a golden cross from one of the sisters. Rev. Shanks says that Maj. Yaqoob commanded the soldier, 'Stop, stop!' Rev. Shanks feels that 'the Major came to [the sisters'] rescue because he had been educated in a Catholic institution at Peshawar and he wanted to repay his debt of gratitude to the Catholic Sisters'.

It is possible that even officers of the Pakistan Army who had not been to Catholic-run schools did not approve of what their untrained soldiers were doing.

However, the ranks felt otherwise. Prof. A. Rashid writes, '[The tribals] started to devastate everything on their way to Srinagar and killed thousands of non-Muslims in Muzaffarābād and Bārāmullā with many rapes of women, too. Not only they but Muslims were also molested by them.'

### **The Martyrdom of Maqbool Sherwani**

The raiders were extremely unpopular with the local people. Sheikh Abdullah, who had by then come to be known as the Sher-e-Kashmīr (the Lion of Kashmīr), organised a people's volunteer force—almost entirely Muslim—against the invaders. Not only did the volunteers provide the Indian army information about the raiders, many Kashmiris died resisting them.

Maqbool Sherwani of Bārāmullā was nailed to a wooden pole and riddled with bullets. He was an activist of the National Conference. Master Abdul Aziz was killed for trying to protect Catholic nuns and other non-Muslim women.

(As we will see, in every subsequent war, including Pakistan's proxy war of the 1990s, thousands of Kashmiri Muslims actively helped the Indian forces against Pakistan, and often sacrificed their lives in the process.)

### **British Officers Annex the 'Northern Areas' to Pākistān**

In 1846, Mahārājā Gulab Singh had obtained Gilgit, as part of the same Treaty of Amritsar that had given him Kashmīr, Ladākh and Baltistan. A few decades later began the 'great game' between the British and their imagined enemy, the Russians. The British convinced themselves that the Russians wanted to conquer South Asia someday, and would do so through Gilgit and the surrounding Himālayan region. Gilgit had another major neighbour as well, China. Because of Gilgit's supposed strategic importance, the British started meddling in the affairs of the Mahārājā's northern territories and created the Gilgit agency. This meant that the British stationed a Political Agent in Gilgit.



In 1913, they created the Gilgit Scouts which had 600 officers and men, who reported to the Political Agent. This was a para-military force, the members of which were mainly the sons of the seven kings of the area.

'Ultimately,' notes Geocities, the website, 'the contest went for nothing: by 1931 the area had been surveyed and it became clear that there was no pass in the region over which the Russians could bring a detachment (let alone an army) to invade India.'

A fortnight before the partition of India in 1947, the Political Agent of Gilgit handed over his charge to Ghansara Singh, a governor appointed by the Mahârâjâ. At the time, Major William Brown was the Commandant of the Gilgit Scouts. Brown was a British officer who had volunteered to preside over the transition from the British to the new South Asian rulers. However, he had decided in advance who these new rulers should be. 'Brown,' says a University of Cambridge website, 'and his second in command, Captain A.S. Mathieson, decided to use the Scouts to stage a coup d'état and take complete control of the Agency and then offer it to Pākistân.' (Centre Of South Asian Studies/ 'Handlist of Papers-Garrett.')

Major Brown was not just a neutral army officer. He either had pre-conceived biases and prejudices or he was acting on orders from above. Qutubuddin Aziz writes, 'An intrepid Scottish soldier, Major Brown was fond of Pākistân and hated the tyrannical Dogrâ straps [satraps?] with Mahârâjâ Hari Singh's evil coterie in Srinagar. The anti-Dogrâ rebellion in the Gilgit Agency, in which *pro-Pākistân* Brown helped, made it possible for Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar, Punial and their neighbouring territories in the lofty Karakoram mountains to be placed under Pākistân's control in the autumn of 1947 which saw the birth of Pākistân.' (*The Dawn*, Karachi, 4 Sept, 02; emphasis mine.)

Brown had, since August 1, 1947, been advising the Governor of Gilgit and Baltistan agencies, Ghansara Singh, and the Mahârâjâ of Kashmir that the "correct course of action for Kashmir would be to join Pākistân" He certainly thought that the Muslim-majority areas of Gilgit, Baltistan, Hunza, Nagar and Chitral should join Pākistân, and ensured that this happened. There was absolutely no reference to the wishes of the people, who had a long standing history of toleration in matters of religion and no prejudices against the Mahârâjâ, the Hindus or India. Col. Yahya Effendi,' a noted defence analyst from Pākistân, would later note, 'The news of Kashmir's accession to India was received in Gilgit calmly.'

Meanwhile, the Wali of Swat attacked Chilas, and the Mahtar of Chitral put together an army to seize Koh-e-Ghizer and Yasin. Major Brown asked the Scouts to take the Governor, Brig. Ghansara Singh, into custody, ostensibly to protect him. Geocities says that Brown had asked the Scouts



to 'arrest' the Governor. The *Daily Excelsior* adds, 'On November 1, 1947, Major Brown declared that Hindu rule had come to an end and Gilgit would join Pākistān.'

Pākistān did not forget its benefactor. Maj. Brown was posthumously awarded the Sitara-e-Pākistān.

### The Instrument of Accession

It was on the 26th October, 1947, that Mahārājā Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession.<sup>3</sup> This Instrument gave the 'dominion legislature' (later, the Parliament of India) the power to 'make laws for this state' only with respect to matters concerning defence, external affairs, communications and some ancillary matters. There was a proviso that the final disposition of the state of Jammū and Kashmir would be made by the free will of the people, as soon as law and order was restored.

The Instrument enabled the Indian Army—the 1st Sikh Regiment, to be precise—to fly into Srinagar on the 27th October. Dr. Karan Singh recalls, 'The attack by Pakistani raiders, comprising tribals and regulars, forced my father [Mahārājā Hari Singh] into signing the Instrument with India.' (Op cit.)

Under pressure from Prime Minister Nehru, the Mahārājā appointed Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah the Head of the Emergency Administration of Jammū and Kashmir on the 30th October, 1947.

On Christmas Day, 1947, Mahatma Gandhi said at a prayer meeting, 'Pakistan has invaded Kashmir. Units of the Indian Army have gone to Kashmir but not to invade Kashmir. They have been sent on the express invitation of the Mahārājā and Sheikh Abdullah. Sheikh Abdullah is the real Mahārājā of Kashmir. Muslims in their thousands are devoted to him.'

The Mahatma then advised the Mahārājā to hand over political power to the Sheikh and assume the role of a constitutional monarch.

(Under the terms of Accession, Hari Singh remained the Mahārājā. The hereditary monarchy was abolished by the state's own Constituent Assembly on the 15th November, 1952. Even then the abolition was only partial. The Assembly elected the Mahārājā's son, Yuvraj (later Dr.) Karan Singh, the Sadar-e-Riyasat (i.e. the head) of the state. Dr. Singh held that office till the 9th April, 1965, when the institution of Governor replaced it. Dr. Singh then became the Governor of the state and remained so till March 1967.)

3 There is some dispute about whether the Instrument was actually signed on the 26th or the 27th October. 26th October is the date affixed on the document. Either way, it makes no material difference.



On January 1, 1948, India requested the Security Council of the United Nations (UN) to 'call upon Pakistan to put an end immediately to the giving of such assistance (to the invaders) which is an act of aggression against India'.

The Sheikh became the Prime Minister of the state on the 5th March, 1948.

The tribal raiders continued to occupy parts of the state. They fought with the Indian Army till the 1st January, 1949, when India and Pakistan agreed on a cease-fire. By then the Indian army had succeeded in liberating several of the areas that the raiders had captured, notably much of Râjourî, Poonch, Leh and Kargil and all of Guréz and Kathuâ.

The cease-fire meant that the areas that had not been liberated by then remained under Pakistani occupation. Indeed, on the 13th August, 1948, under the first basic, agreed resolution of the UNCIP (UN Commission for India and Pakistan), the respectively held areas of Kashmîr were placed under the administration of India and Pakistan, pending a final resolution of the issue.

Pakistan carved the territories administered by it into three parts. It calls the southernmost part 'Âzâd Jammû and Kashmîr'. This consists of the areas carved out of or bordering the Indian districts of Râjourî, Poonch, Jammû and Bârâmullâ. It gifted a considerable chunk of Leh district to China, strengthening its credentials as the false mother. Pakistan calls the third portion, sliced out of Leh and Kargil, the Northern Areas.

### **Pakistani establishment at cross-purposes**

The founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Âzam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, was quite clear about Kashmîr. He believed that the princely states of undivided India had the right to become independent countries, if they so desired. This applied to Kashmîr as well. Mr. Jinnah said that Pakistan would have no objection to a Kashmîr that was independent of both India and Pakistan. On this he was consistent. He said this several times in June and July 1947, as the President of the All India Muslim League. (See, for instance, the *Dawn* Karachi, dated the 18th June, 13th July and 31st July, 1947.)

Mr. Jinnah then became the first Governor General of Pakistan. He held that office till his death on the 11th September, 1948. As long as he was alive, that was the line that his government took—for the record. The actions of his army were another matter altogether.

However, shortly after the Quaid's death the government of Pakistan did a volte face. On the 25th December, 1948, Mr. Zafarullah Khân, the foreign minister of Pakistan, wrote to the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) saying that Kashmîr could accede either to India or to



Pakistan. This was the first occasion when Pakistan officially ruled out the 'third option,' i.e. Kashmir's independence. Ever since, Pakistan's official stance has been that Kashmir is Pakistan's 'shāh rag' (jugular vein). Pakistan thus celebrated the birth anniversary of its founder by reversing his position on Kashmir.

### **Why did the Indian army not recover the occupied territory?**

Countless Kashmiri (and right-wing Indian) intellectuals say that the Indian army could have easily recovered the territory annexed by Pakistan. They add that a certain politician prevented the army from doing so. The name of the politician depends on who is telling the story. Their theory runs thus, 'The people of 'Āzād Kashmir' and the 'Northern Areas' are not ethnic Kashmiris. They mostly speak Paharhi (which is similar to Punjabi and Dogri) or Balti/Sheena. If they had remained in the state, ethnic Kashmiris would have been reduced to a minority. The Paharhis, Dogrās and Gujjars, who share a similar culture and language, would have then formed the majority.' Therefore, it was in the political interest of certain politicians to let Pākistān retain the areas that it had captured. The people of those areas did not speak Kashmiri anyway.

In Pakistan, too, they believe that their brave soldiers could have 'easily' taken all of Jammū and Kashmir, but for their military elite. (In Pakistani demonology—and, indeed, reality—the generals inhabit the space that politicians occupy in India and the West.) H.A. War reflects the Pakistani point of view. He writes, 'From October 1947 onwards the Pakistan-supported Āzād Kashmir Forces [i.e. the tribesmen] were gaining ground and had come to the position of defeating the Indian Army from Poonth-Rājouri, Chhamb, Jangarh and Mendhar sides and could easily march towards Jammū city... Major General Akbar Khān, who was the Area Commander of the Pak(istani) Army [was shocked by the cease-fire and hence] hatched a conspiracy with the support of some top Army officers to overthrow [the Pakistani] government and continue war in J&K and conquer Kashmir. But Ayub Khān [who later became a Field Marshall] and some other Army officers foiled that conspiracy called "Rawalpindi conspiracy" and Major General Akbar Khān and others were arrested and Court Martialled.'<sup>4</sup>

Historian C. Dasgupta has bad news for conspiracy theorists on all three sides. The villain, he writes, was not Pt. Nehru (leave alone Sheikh Abdullah or Ayub Khān) but Lord Mountbatten, the then Governor General of India. Even after India became independent it chose to retain, for a few years, the British heads of its army, air force and navy. Dasgupta's revisionist account holds them, too, responsible.

4 At least this account buries the fiction that it was a 'spontaneous attack by some tribals.'



He writes that Pt. Nehru had come to the conclusion that, "the obvious course is to strike at [Pakistani] concentrations and lines of communications in Pakistan territory." However, General Lockhart, the British Commander-in-Chief [C-in-C] of the Indian Army, 'insisted that it would not be possible to expel the raiders from the Jhelum valley until the next spring. Moreover, the [defence] service chiefs and Mountbatten had effectively scuttled the government's directive to employ the air force against the invaders along the border from Naushera to Muzaffarabad.' Pt. Nehru had wanted the Indian Army to be 'prepared to enter the Sialkot, Gujarat and Jhelum districts of Pakistan in order to deny the raiders the assistance they were getting at their bases. Mountbatten, in his capacity as chairman of the defence committee, stated flatly that no directive should be issued on these lines.' Mountbatten's motive, Mr. Dasgupta says, was 'to avert a full-fledged war between India and Pakistan... in keeping with British policy.'

The Government of India further directed its army to recapture the territories that Pākistān had taken in the Muzaffarabad area. Nehru also wanted to invade Lahore, in order to make Pākistān give up its aggression. The British officers in the Indian army did not carry out any of these instructions.

India did recapture several territories in Poonch, Rājouri and Kargil, especially Poonch town. Nehru did this by giving instructions directly to the field commanders, and bypassing the British service chiefs.

To this day the Indian right continues to slam Pt. Nehru for having been a bleeding heart pinko because he took the Kashmir issue to the United Nations. He should have, instead, sent in the army to liberate the occupied areas, they feel. Dasgupta rescues Pt. Nehru from the still-furious right on this account as well. He says, 'It was [Mountbatten] who had first proposed a UN-supervised plebiscite in Kashmir.'

Nehru resisted the idea of going to the UN. The British coaxed him by promising a 'clear verdict' in India's favour. Nehru did not fall for the sweet talk and decided to go on an offensive, instead.

According to Mr. Dasgupta, the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, then made a telephone call to Pt. Nehru and warned that it would "gravely prejudice India's case if it were to send its forces into Pākistān." Dasgupta adds, 'In the [UN] Security Council it soon became clear that India would face condemnation if it were to send its forces into Pākistān.'

Above all, 'The new C-in-C, General Bacher [also a British national], confided to the US charge d'affaires that he had taken no steps to prepare the Indian army for a cross-border operation'.



### Plebiscite and the UN Resolutions

On the 5th January, 1949, the UN passed a resolution asking both countries to determine the wish of the people of the state.

"These resolutions," Pakistani analyst and parliamentarian M.P. Bhandara would later write, "contain the following provisions: The Pakistan Army will be totally withdrawn from all parts of Kashmir (as well as the mujahideen who were described as tribesmen in those days). India is not obliged to withdraw its Army in Kashmir in full. The plebiscite will be arranged and held by India for all practical purposes.

"Is it conceivable that any Pakistan government would allow a plebiscite under these conditions? So why cry for a solution which is inherently unacceptable? In the very unlikely event of India agreeing to a plebiscite, we [Pakistan] will have to reject the UN resolutions on Kashmir as they stand." (The *Dawn*, Karachi, Pakistan, August 1999.)

Indeed, the mood in the state was so pro-India at the time that the plebiscite would have certainly gone in India's favour. So, Pakistan prevented the plebiscite first by not withdrawing its forces to this day, and then by helping split the state into five parts. (Mr. Bhandara mentions only four. He probably counts '  z  d Jamm   and Kashmir' and the 'Northern Areas' as one.) Incidentally, there is a sixth fragment, too. Hunza was merged with Pakistan-proper in 1974.

Even the India-baiting, pro-Pakistan Alastair Lamb agrees that 'In the early years of the dispute... a majority of the population of both Kashmir and Jamm   provinces would, in fact, had they been given the chance to express their preferences, not have opted for union with Pakistan... [S]ome kind of association with the Indian republic would have been acceptable.'

The princely state of Jamm   and Kashmir had an area of 2,22,236 sq. km. It is now split into six units, which are almost impossible to unify. Pakistan has occupied 78,114 sq. km. which it has split into two parts. China is in occupation of 42,685 sq. km. which, again, is in two parts. 37,555 sq.km. are in Aksai Chin, which China invaded in 1962, and 5,120 sq.km. in the Shaksgam region "that was ceded by Pakistan to China" the next year. (The quote is from M.P. Bhandara, op cit. Mr. Bhandara lists this among the "reason(s) why the UN resolutions of 1948/ 49 are made obsolete by time.")<sup>5</sup> India administers 101,447 sq.km.

5 P.G. Rasool, quoting A.G. Noorani, says that 'in actual practice Pakistan gained 700 square miles of territory in Shimshal valley.' He does not substantiate the claim. The important thing is that Pakistan has altered, perhaps irretrievably, the territories of the state as they had existed on 14 August 1947, making the UN resolution unimplementable.



### 1950-53: Constitutional Ties

The Constituent Assembly of newly independent India had been working on the Constitution of India. On the 17th October, 1949, it approved the 370th Article of this Constitution. This article governs the relationship of the Union of India with the State of Jammû & Kashmîr. It guarantees J&K autonomy of a kind that no other Indian state enjoys. This was in fulfilment of the rights promised to the state in the Instrument of Accession.

Above all, Article 370 gave Jammû & Kashmîr alone among all Indian states the right to have a Constitution, and thus have a flag, of its own. It accepted that 'the power of (the Indian) Parliament to make laws for the said State shall be limited' by and large to 'matters specified in the Instrument of Accession'. Till 1965, the state even had its own Prime Minister.

In July 1950, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah enacted the most revolutionary land reforms in the history of India. The proprietary rights of almost ten thousand absentee landlords were transferred to the tillers. No compensation was paid to the former landowners. (The Constitution of India, on the other hand, requires that compensation has necessarily to be paid.) More than sixty per cent of the population of Kashmir benefitted from these reforms.

M. Brecher, a contemporary author, wrote in *The Struggle for Kashmir* (OUP, 1953), 'The vast majority of Kashmiris have benefitted from these reforms and many of those interviewed expressed the fear that in Pakistan, where no comparable land reforms have taken place, the land given to them might be returned to the landlords... [Therefore,] the overwhelming majority [of Kashmiris] favour the continuation of the present pro-Indian Government of Jammû and Kashmîr.'

(Over the next few years the governments of several important countries would accept this analysis. The first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, and the Soviet Prime Minister, Nikolay Bulganin, visited Srinagar on the 10th December, 1955. They said that the people of Kashmir had settled the Kashmir question and that Kashmir was one of the states of India. Three months later, on the 16th March, the Chinese premier Chou [Zhou] En Lai said much the same: that the people of Kashmir had already expressed their will regarding accession to India. Another seven months later, on the 17th November, 1956, the British Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, said, 'Kashmîr has definitely opted for union with India.')

Indeed, accession to Pakistan was not a desire expressed by any shade of political opinion in the state at the time. The pro-Pakistan Muslim Conference had a base only in the areas that are now in 'Âzâd Jammû & Kashmîr'. Mr. Mohiuddin Qarra left the ruling National Conference when the Sheikh did not include him in his cabinet. He alone would later speak up for Pakistan.



In July-August 1952, India's Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, and the Prime Minister of the State, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, worked out the historic Delhi Agreement. On the one hand this agreement spelt out the details of the state's autonomy within the Union of India. On the other, it affirmed that Kashmir was an integral part of India. These details meant that several subjects that had not been conceded to the Union of India in the Instrument of Accession were granted now. The Sheikh announced this to a huge, cheering crowd at Srinagar's Lal Chowk on the 26th July, 1952.

### 1953-1975: The Sheikh's Years of Wilderness

However, things began to go wrong shortly thereafter.

H.A. War tells it thus, 'Sheikh [Muhammad] Abdullah realised [that the dilution of the State's autonomy through the Delhi Agreement was a] legal blunder. [Therefore he] hesitated to give full effect to [the] Delhi Agreement of 1952. He insisted on [a] reconsideration and amendment of [the] Delhi Agreement but the New Delhi Govt. refused to do so and insisted on Sheikh [Muhammad] Abdullah to adhere to [the] already executed Delhi Agreement. Thus [a] controversy between Sheikh [Muhammad] Abdullah and Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru started...'

On the 9th August, 1953, the Government of India advised Yuvraj Karan Singh, the *Sadar-e-Riyasat*, to remove Sheikh Abdullah from the post of Prime Minister, arrest him, and replace him with Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad. Mirza Afzal Beg, who ranked second in the Sheikh's cabinet, was also detained. The Bakhshi, too, was a ranking member of the cabinet.

As mentioned, by now the Sheikh had acquired a near-messianic status among the people of Kashmir and Doda. Scheduled Caste Hindus of Jammû, too, were beholden to him. His land reforms had benefitted almost every single underclass rural family. So, when the Sheikh was arrested, his countless admirers organised angry demonstrations in various parts of Kashmir and Doda. I am told that for several months life in Kashmir came to a standstill and the valley and Doda became virtually ungovernable. The State Government got its police to put down these agitations. Several dozen workers of the National Conference were killed in the process. (Records of those unfortunate months—as of the 1990s—are terribly biased. Some records exaggerate the death toll wildly. Others pretend that the transition of power from the Sheikh to the Bakhshi was mostly peaceful.)

'Was the arrest necessary?' analyst V.N. Datta would later ask, adding that, 'Despite the long judicial proceedings against the Sheikh, there was nothing to prove his guilt, and the trial had to be called off. Eventually, Nehru had to intervene, and [in 1958] the Sheikh was released.'



Upon the Sheikh's arrest most members of the NC left the party. On the 9th August, 1955, they formed the Plebiscite Front, with Mirza Afzal Beg as its President. (The Mirza had been released from prison earlier that year.) The Front wanted the people of the state to decide, through a plebiscite, about the political and constitutional future of the state. The Sheikh never formally became a member of the Front. (The Front was dissolved in 1975, when it converted itself back into the National Conference. It was not banned, except in 1971, because in the 1950s the Constitution of India did not outlaw even organisations demanding the secession of a state from the Union of India. The PF was asking for much less.)

The Bakhshi became the head of what was left of the NC.

### **A Plebiscite Administrator is appointed**

The Indian Prime Minister invited his Pakistani counterpart, Mr. Muhammad Ali Bogra, to New Delhi for negotiations. They issued a Joint Declaration in which it was agreed that a plebiscite administrator would be appointed in April 1954, to ascertain the views of the people of the state.

The UN appointed Sir Owen Dixon as the administrator of the plebiscite. 'In the meantime,' H.A. War adds, 'the Pakistan government unwisely and prematurely involved herself in American-sponsored military pacts against the Soviet-Russia bloc and allowed her territory, including Gilgit [in POK] to be a base for the American army... This antagonised and enraged Soviet Russia. The result was that Soviet Russia vetoed the American sponsored resolutions for implementation of Plebiscite Resolutions... This is the fundamental and starting point which gave diplomatic victory to India.'

### **An integral part of the Union of India**

Till 1956, India considered all of Jammū and Kashmīr a disputed territory. Towards the end of that year a major change took place that, from India's point of view, rendered UN resolutions on Kashmīr irrelevant. On the 17th November, 1956, the Constituent Assembly of Jammū and Kashmīr adopted and enacted the Constitution of Jammū and Kashmīr. Section 3 of the State's constitution said, 'The State of Jammū and Kashmīr is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India.'

Section 4 went on to add, 'The territory of the State shall comprise all the territories which on the fifteenth day of August, 1947, were under the sovereignty or suzerainty of the Ruler of the State.'

With such unambiguous declarations by the Constituent Assembly of the State, India's official stance on Kashmīr changed. Thenceforth, India began to refer to Kashmīr as its *atoot aṅg* ('a part of the body that can not be severed' or 'integral part'). The dispute with Pakistan was now limited to the territories under its illegal occupation.



### Dynamic/popular/incorruptible: but unrepresentative

Between 1953 and 1975, the state had a succession of Prime/ Chief Ministers. (The Prime Minister of the state was renamed Chief Minister in April 1965.) The Bakhshi (1953-63), a former lieutenant of the Sheikh, was extremely popular, and effective. Aided by generous finances from Delhi,<sup>6</sup> he masterminded the rapid economic transformation of one of India's three most backward states into one of its top ten states. He left behind what a journalist would later call 'a whole range of developmental milestones.' (*Greater Kashmir*, 3 Feb, 2003.) G.M. Sadiq (1964-71) was respected for his incorruptibility and his sense of fairplay and justice.

However, no one, not even the ideological successors of these Chief Ministers, would accuse them or their governments of being representative. Nor do the state governments of that period have apologists left in any section of political opinion in the rest of India. Certainly not in the extreme right, nor even in the ruling elite of that era.

Candidates representing the Sheikh boycotted all elections. (In 1971-72 alone were they legally barred from contesting elections.) That was the main reason why the governments of that era were quite unrepresentative. Several Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) of the State were known as 'Khaliq-made MLAs.' They owed their position not to the electorate but to Mr. Khaliq, a powerful local bureaucrat, who declared them 'elected.'

The rigging of elections in Kashmir went beyond the crude casting of fake votes that takes place in, say, Pakistan or Bihar. In Kashmir such things were done with style and imagination. In 1971, a member of the Jamat-e-Isl  mi decided to stand for elections to the national parliament from the   na  tn  g constituency. This was an unprecedented decision for a Jamati. There was a huge groundswell of support for him. The main secular party knew that its candidate would lose. So it sent its workers in jeeps all over   na  tn  g, claiming to be workers of the Jamat. They announced over megaphones that the Jamat had decided to boycott the 1971 elections as well. As a result most of the Jamat's voters stayed at home and the secular party's candidate won. (A ranking Kashmiri Congressman, who had taken part in this game, gave me these details.)

6 In 2001, for instance, Delhi gave the State Rs.6,000 per capita. Of this almost half was plan assistance. This is generous by any standards. It does *not* include what Delhi spends on the army and para- military forces in the State. Since 1990, J&K has been on a par with six other states singled out by the Government of India for the highest financial assistance. Between 1952 and 1989, too, it was in a favoured category, but normally seventh or eighth among the Indian states in terms of per capita assistance. In 1999- 2000, *after* a decade of militancy, of all Indian states J&K had the lowest number of people below the poverty line: 3.46 lakh people (or 3.5% of the population).



And yet, as the 1967 and 1972 elections would later indicate, radically different points of view did get accommodated. At least some MLAs from the Valley (and most from Jammû and Ladâkh) did represent their constituents.

The Sheikh alternated between occasional spells of freedom and house arrest at places as far apart as Kud (Jammû) and Ooty, a hill station in Tamil Nadu, between 1953 and 1975.

He was released from 'house arrest' in 1958—for a while. After a short spell of freedom the Sheikh was detained again, this time for the Kashmir Conspiracy Case. He was accused of working for the secession of Kashmir from India.

In October 1962, China invaded Ladâkh and helped itself to 14,500 sq. miles of undefended Indian territory, including a lot of the stunning Pangong Lake. (That was an era of pacifism in Indian politics. India considered China not just a friend but a 'brother'. So, it did not see the need to keep an army on its borders with China.)

China coveted not just Indian Ladâkh but also some parts of Ladâkh that had been occupied illegally by Pakistan. So, the Eastern giant asked its vassal to cough up 5,130 sq. km. of Occupied Ladâkh as a tribute. Pakistan obliged its overlord. Solomon would have summarily ejected Pakistan from his court for agreeing to carve up the baby.

An event took place on the 27th December, 1963, that rocked the Valley, yes, to its very roots. It led to the first major mass demonstrations after the Accession of 1947. The holiest relic in the Valley, a hair from the beard of Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, was stolen from Srinagar's Hazratbal shrine. All shopkeepers pulled down their shutters and people hoisted black flags everywhere. Huge processions were taken out, mourning the loss of the much-loved relic. Thousands of people went about town demanding the immediate recovery of the relic and strict action against the culprits.

Fortunately, the relic was recovered the next week and identified as genuine. Whoever had stolen it put it back where it belonged. Everyone has a good idea as to who the culprits were. However, they have not been identified officially. The theory is that a powerful but well-meaning person had 'borrowed' the relic for his seriously ill mother to see. Therefore, no one holds the act against him any more.

### **The Sheikh visits Pakistan**

The political fallout of the Hazratbal incident was that Delhi released the Sheikh from detention. It knew that only he could soothe the inflamed passions. The Kashmir Conspiracy Case was withdrawn. Pt. Nehru requested the Sheikh and Mirza Afzal Beg to go to Pakistan to pave the way for a



settlement of the Kashmir issue. They did so in May 1964. However, Pt. Nehru died in New Delhi while the two Kashmiri leaders were in Pakistan. The Sheikh-Mirza visit was cut short.

Sheikh Abdullah was arrested again after Pt. Nehru's death.

### The 1965 War

Once in every few years since its creation, Pakistan has tried to annex Kashmir. International opinion (and law) being what it is, it is not possible for Pakistan to send in its army. Not openly at least. So, its army trains unemployed rural Pakistanis, arms them and sends them into India. If they win, good for Pakistan, which then takes over the captured territories. If they don't, deny that you've got anything to do with them. Total deniability. Low cost.

In August 1965, Pakistan did it again. President Ayub Khân directed General Musa to 'defreeze Kashmir problem... and bring India to conference table.' He really believed (as did his successors in 1999) that India would take the Pakistani attack lying down. His directive to Musa said, 'As a general rule Hindu morale would not stand more than a couple of hard blows delivered at the right time and place.'<sup>7</sup>

'On the night of August 5/6, 1965, hundreds of armed men crossed the cease-fire line from Pakistan-controlled Kashmir to the Indian side.' (Cloughley, *The Pakistani Army: Wars and Insurrections*.) Arif Jamal (*The News*, Pakistan, the 11th July, 1999) adds, 'Pakistan's aggression in Kashmir, code named Operation Gibraltar [sic], precipitated [the] Indian attack on Pakistan.'

Lal Din, a Muslim Gujjar who was later awarded the 'Padma Shri', was the first to alert the Indian government about the infiltration. Thousands of other nameless Muslims gave the Indian forces clues about where the Pakistanis were hiding. This greatly helped the Indian forces in their efforts to flush the infiltrators out. Pakistan imposed yet another pointless war that resulted, on the 11th September, in a U.N.-brokered cease-fire. The Indian Army conquered Pakistani territory, among other places, in the Lahore and Sialkote sectors. Pakistan had a clear edge in Jammû district.

7 'For long Pakistan was the belligerent power in the sub-continent,' the right-wing Pakistani columnist Ayaz Amir would write thirty-seven years later. 'Its people subscrib[ed] to the belief that one Muslim was equal in combat to ten Hindus. In the order of battle for the 1965 war it was actually put down in black and white that as a rule Hindu morale cracked under a few sharp blows. We have learned our lessons in heroism the hard way.' (*Greater Kashmir*, June 3, 2002.)



Who won? The Pakistanis genuinely believe that they did. They even have a Victory Day to celebrate their 'victory' in that war. Western writers like Christina Lamb (*Waiting for Allah*) say that Pakistan lost. Jamal writes, '(Cloughley) stops short of declaring the September 1965 war as a defeat for Pakistan because "both countries' economies were badly affected and their defence forces suffered severe blows".'

H.A. War sums up the result thus, 'India invaded Lahore, Sialkote, Sind, etc. Pakistan had a narrow escape from annihilation through the historical bravery and unity of [the Pakistani] Army and Punjabi civil population.' (H.A. War was a founder member of Kashmir's Islâmic Students League, many members of which later became militants. His politics have been anything but pro-India.)

### **The Tashkent Agreement**

A peace conference was convened in Tashkent (then in the Soviet Union) in January 1966. According to the Tashkent Agreement, which India and Pakistan signed, both countries would withdraw their forces to the 'Cease-fire Line' of 1949.

The Pakistani scholar F.S. Aijazuddin recalls, "At Tashkent, the talks between Nehru's successor [as Prime Minister of India] Lal Bahadur Shastri and [the Pakistani President, Field Marshall] Ayub Khân were on the verge of collapse on the morning of January 10, 1966, until they were rescued by the [Soviet] Premier Kosygin who shuttled the whole day between the two intransigent leaders until they reached a compromise...

"Shastri conceded an adjustment on the cease-fire line and the cession of some areas to Pakistan. Ayub Khân held back his consent and said he would give his reply later. The same night Shastri died and with him hopes of any settlement, however partial." (The *Dawn*, Karachi, Pakistan, August 1999.)

All the same, on the 25th February, 1966, India returned to Pakistan all the territories that it had conquered during the 1965 war.

### **The Changing Fortunes of the PF**

Pakistan's lack of success in the 1965 war demoralised a section of the Plebiscite Front (PF). Mr. Ali Muhammad Naik, who was the General Secretary of the PF, and other like-minded members felt that the Front ought to stop boycotting elections to the State Assembly. Two of them contested the 1967 elections. Both won. However, the Sheikh and Mr. Beg did not approve. They expelled Mr. Naik and his followers from the PF.

Around then a Kashmîrî Pandit girl, Parmeshwari, got married to a Muslim. This enraged the Kashmîrî Pandits. They launched the most intense agitation that the Valley had seen since 1963. The situation threatened to get



out of hand. A violent clash between the hotheads of the two communities was feared. The PF, which had a huge following among the masses, helped the Sadiq government maintain the peace. As a token of its gratitude, the government removed the restrictions that it had placed on the movements of the Sheikh and Mr. Beg.

### **Accommodating Political Diversity**

Pakistan, as mentioned, had no noticeable political support in the state. Till 1968, that is. The Sheikh was released from house arrest that year. Some Delhi-based lawyers helped organise in Srinagar a meeting of all the political parties of the state. The State People's Convention was held at the Mujahid Manzil, the Headquarters of the National Conference.

At the conference, Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad forcefully recommended that the state remain within India. A number of delegates, led by Abdul Rashid Shah, an advocate, asked for a plebiscite to be held to find out what the people of the state wanted. Among those who supported India were Maulana Masoodi and Ghulam Mohiuddin Qarra.

Pakistan received political support from a single delegate. Syed Ali Shah Geelani of the Jam  t-e-Isl  mi, a right wing Isl  mic organisation, said that he favoured the accession of Kashmir to Pakistan.

And yet the idea of Pakistan was soon forgotten, at least for a while. Till then the Jam  t-e-Isl  mi had not participated in any elections, in India or Pakistan. However, Mr. Geelani and fellow Jam  tis from Kashmir decided to contest the 1972 elections to the Jamm   and Kashmir Legislative Assembly. Three stalwarts of the party, including Mr. Geelani, won. All three took the oath of allegiance to the Constitution of India when they entered the Assembly. They functioned as legislators for the entire five-year term of the Assembly. (Mr. Geelani later won from the Sopore constituency in 1977 and 1987 as well.)

### **The 1971 War/The Hijacking of the 'Gang  '**

On the 13th January, 1971, the state police discovered the existence of a secessionist organisation called Al Fateh. The organisation was never heard of thereafter. This was the first time that an organised group, though short-lived, was found to be working for the secession of the state from India.

Later that month, on the 30th, *Ganga*, an Indian Airlines (IA) Fokker Friendship aeroplane flying from Srinagar to Jamm   was hijacked to Lahore. The hijackers claimed to be Kashmiri militants. The hijacking resulted in a strange, childish euphoria and excitement in Pakistan. Instead of arresting the hijackers immediately, the authorities in Lahore egged them on to blow up the plane.



Hashim Qurêshî, who led the hijackers, had gone over to Pakistan in April 1970. Once there, Maqbool Bhatt, the leader of the Jammû and Kashmîr Liberation Front (JKLF), trained Qurêshî for the hijacking. According to Qurêshî, 'as soon as he and other hijackers forced the aircraft to land at Lahore, he was contacted by SSP [chief of district police] Lahore Sardar Wakil who asked him to burn the plane. According to [Qurêshî], Major Rahim of ISI [Inter Services Intelligence] and K.H. Khursheed, former President of Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir, former president of the Bar at Supreme Court of Pakistan and onetime private secretary to Mohammad Ali Jinnah, were witness to how SSP Lahore motivated him to burn the plane.' Qurêshî added, '[The SSP] told us that it was Maqbool Bhat's order to burn the plane. We acted accordingly. However, when later Bhat met us at the Lahore airport, he said that he had not conveyed any such orders.' (Both quotes are from the *Daily Excelsior*, Jammû, the 18th January, 2001.)

In January 1971, Qamar Ali Gilani was the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Cantonment, Lahore. A few days after Mr. Qurêshî's confession, Mr. Gilani told the Pakistani daily *Jang* that it was he who had set the *Ganga* on fire, 'on orders.' (*The Times of India*, February 6, 2001.) The Chairman of the JKLF, Mr. Amanullah Khân, has written in his autobiography that the Pakistani establishment had manipulated Maqbool Bhatt, that the JKLF had indeed hijacked *Ganga* and that the hijacking and blowing up of the *Ganga* were mistakes.

One should read the Pakistani newspapers of the days following the blowing up to see how thrilled most Pakistanis, leaders as well as ordinary folk, were when the Indian plane went up in flames. You simply won't miss the glee on the faces of senior Pakistani officials and leaders in photographs of the incident. It was as if Pakistan had won a major cricket victory (or a minor battle) against India.

At the time Pakistan had two wings, West and East, with India in between. Pakistani aeroplanes, civil as well as military, would fly between the two wings over thousands of miles of India. When some Pakistanis destroyed the IA plane, India retaliated by banning flights between West and East Pakistan through Indian airspace. After that the only way that Pakistan could send troops, guns or even supplies from West to East Pakistan was by refuelling its aircraft in Sri Lanka. This was very expensive and inconvenient for it. Which is why Pakistan has been trying to disown the blowing up of the IA plane ever since.

There are two other reasons why Pakistan has been blaming the JKLF entirely for that incident.

Pakistan has split Occupied Kashmîr into two: Âzâd Jammû and Kashmîr (the occupied parts of Râjournî, Poonch, Mirpur and Muzaffarâbâd) and the



Northern Areas (mainly occupied Kargil). Mr. Amanullah Khân belonged to Gilgit, which is in the Northern Areas. He consistently opposed the delinking of the NAs from AJK. Among other things, if he had accepted this delinking, then, by the Pakistani government's definition, he ceased to be a Kashmiri. Secondly, Maqbool Bhatt stood for an independent, reunited Jammû and Kashmir. He opposed the State's accession to Pakistan.

Pakistan was rattled by Bhatt and Khân's positions on these two issues. The disastrous blowing up of the *Ganga* came in as a handy excuse for Pakistan to distance itself from Bhatt, Khân and Qurêshî.

And yet Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was one of the leaders present at the Lahore airport to cheer the hijackers on. Khursheed and Maqbool Bhatt were also there. Bhutto's party had just won the elections in West Pakistan. He was not only attempting to become the Prime Minister of the country (which he later did), he was the civilian with the greatest influence on the then military government of Pakistan.

By then a secessionist movement was brewing in East Pakistan. 'The [Pakistani] Army thought it could subdue the 'Bingos' [Bengalis] by a mass slaughter [of "several hundreds of thousands of Bengalis"]. India only exploited the weakness of Pakistan.' (Jamal op. cit. in single quotes, Cloughley in double.)

This resulted in Pakistan and India going to war for a third time, on the 3rd December, 1971. There was war on the Jammû and Kashmir border/cease-fire line, too. Jammû was attacked. On the 16th December, the Pakistani army in its eastern wing surrendered to India. East Pakistan became Bangladesh. The ban on the flight of Pakistani aeroplanes over Indian territory was one of the factors that contributed to the Pakistani defeat.

### **The Simla Agreement**

India now held ninety-three thousand Pakistani officers and soldiers in its prisons. The Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, met at Simla (as it was then spelt) in July 1972, to 'establish durable peace in the sub-continent'. Mr. Bhutto's daughter, Benazir, then a student, accompanied him.

The presence of its Lieutenant and Major Generals, Brigadiers and other officers in Indian jails was a matter of national humiliation in Pakistan. Public opinion in that country wanted its boys back at the earliest. Benazir later noted in her autobiography that India could have dictated terms at Simla.

Within India there was unanimity that India should use this bargaining chip for 'a final settlement of Jammû and Kashmir'. The only differences were on what that settlement should have been. The right wanted Pakistan



to return to India the areas of Jammû and Kashmîr under its occupation in return for its men. Saner Indians merely wanted to convert the 'line of control [LOC] resulting from the cease-fire of December 17, 1971' into an international border. (By 1999 almost the entire world would agree that this was the only possible solution: each country would keep what it had and stop coveting what the other administered.)

Mr. Bhutto pleaded with Mrs. Gandhi not to treat Pakistan as a vanquished country, but to give him an agreement that he could sell at home. The historic Simla Agreement was signed on July 3, 1972. It accommodated Mr. Bhutto's plea so completely that, as Benazir would note, the jubilant Pakistani negotiators cried out, '*Larhka hua hai.*' ('Rejoice, for a son is born.' In much of sexist South Asia the birth of a daughter is bad news.) Moderate Indians had prevailed.

The Simla Agreement made two things clear:

- a) 'The two countries are resolved to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations.'

However, no sooner had the Simla Agreement been signed than it became a matter of state policy in Pakistan to 'internationalise' Kashmîr. There is no sense of guilt or shame in that country for having gone back on a solemn, written assurance, in exchange for which it had got back ninety-three thousand of its soldiers and was spared a humiliating treaty, which India had in its power to impose.

- b) 'In Jammû and Kashmîr (the LOC) shall be respected by both sides without prejudice to the recognised position of either side. Neither side will seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations. Both sides further undertake to refrain from the threat or the use of force in violation of this line.'

This is another clause that Pakistan has been violating regularly and brutally: through the reign of terror that it masterminded in the state in the 1990s and through its self-destructive aggression in Kargil in 1999. It makes even doves like this writer (with all my love for the people and culture of Pakistan) wonder if there's any point in ever entering into a treaty with Pakistan, considering that it will not be honoured anyway.

Nationalistic Indians often claim that there was a secret clause in the Simla Agreement, solving the Kashmîr problem once and for all. There was no need for a secret clause when two phrases said it all: 'without prejudice to the recognised position of either side' and 'neither side will seek to alter [the LOC] unilaterally'. In plain English they mean that Mrs. Gandhi and Mr. Bhutto had explicitly, in writing, agreed that i) India would keep the parts of the state that it had and Pakistan would retain the areas it had



occupied; and ii) the LOC would be as inviolable as an international border, without calling it that.

### **The PF Clarifies its Stand**

The wildly popular Sheikh Abdullah had been dismissed from office and placed under arrest in 1953. This divided thinking Kashmir into three broad groups: pro-India, pro-independence and pro-Pakistan. But after the breakup of Pakistan, many who had thitherto favoured the secession of Kashmir from India began to reconsider their stand.

H.A. War writes, 'After [Pakistan's defeat in the] 1971 war, the upper rank and file of the Plebiscite Front, except the extremist lobby, got disappointed and managed to persuade Sheikh [Muhammad] Abdullah... [to] seek a solution within the sovereignty of India. Consequently, on the directions of Sheikh [Muhammad] Abdullah, the president of Plebiscite Front Mirza Afzal [Beg] issued a policy statement from New Delhi on 5th February, 1972, declaring that "there was no dispute about accession of the J&K state with India. The dispute was only with regard to [the] quantum of accession."

### **The Return of the Sheikh (1975-82)**

On the 10th November 1973, the Sheikh, now finally out of prison, reminded everyone that Kashmir's accession to India was final.

Like the false mother that it was, Pakistan continued to chop up the state. The fabled Hunza, where life expectancy is among the highest in the world, was one of the territories that Maj. Brown had gifted to Pakistan in 1947. On the 24th September, 1974, Pakistan sliced Hunza out of the so-called Northern Areas and merged it with Pakistan-proper.

Around the same time G. Parthasarathy and Mirza Afzal Beg were working out the details of a final settlement of the Kashmir issue. They represented the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, and the Sheikh respectively. Their 'Agreed Conclusions' were finalised on the 13th November, 1974.

Each day that the Kashmiris were denied control of their own destiny through leaders of their choice bred disaffection among the people of Kashmir against the Indian State. It also brought into question the legitimacy of the men who were ruling the state. Fortunately, these men had the wisdom to accept as much—that the Sheikh was the true representative of Kashmir, not they.

On the 24th February, 1975, Syed Mir Qasim resigned from the office of Chief Minister. His party, the Indian National Congress, had a majority both in the National Parliament and in the State Assembly. Its Jamm   and Kashmir unit invited Sheikh Abdullah to become the Chief Minister. The Sheikh assumed office the next day.



The executive committee of the Plebiscite Front met for the last time in July 1975. This was at the Mujahid Manzil. The Sheikh and the Mirza wound up the Front and reverted to the National Conference.

On the 15th August, 1975, the Indian Independence Day was celebrated in the state as never before. The Sheikh mobilised his extensive cadres to ensure this. At rallies everywhere there were cries of 'Âzâd Hindustan Zindabad' ('Long live independent India'-this being the state's equivalent of 'Jai Hind'). The Kashmiris once again affirmed that they were Indians, and by choice. The Kashmir issue had been resolved. Well, at least for a while.

During the next two years the Sheikh effected some major administrative reforms. The most revolutionary of these is called Single Line Administration. This gave district administrators the power to decide on all district-level matters on their own. They no longer had to consult (or get the approval of) the state capital on most matters.

However, on the 25th March, 1977, the Congress withdrew its support. For the first time after 1947, the state came to be ruled by its Governor, who is a nominee of New Delhi. The Governor, L.K. Jha, ordered that elections to the state legislative assembly would be held on the 30th June.

The Janata Party had just been voted to power at the Centre (New Delhi) and in several North Indian states, riding an unprecedented wave of popularity. This wave extended to parts of Jammû province as well. In Kashmîr, the Awami Action Committee of the Mîr Waiz decided to support the party. The Janata Party was now poised to do extremely well throughout the state.

Just then the Sheikh fell ill. Some top-rung leaders of the Janata Party visited Srinagar to canvas for their party. They harmed their party's chances by not calling on the ailing Sheikh and by making some insensitive comments. The day before the elections a rumour electrified the Valley: the Sheikh was dead and his body was lying in state on slabs of ice. Even people who did not support the Sheikh plunged into mourning. An enormous 'sympathy-wave' arose overnight.

The Sheikh swept the 1977 elections. These elections were considered the fairest to have been held in the state till then. This fairness weaned even more people away from the pro-independence/ pro-Pakistan schools of thought. When Pakistan executed its own democratically elected Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in 1979, there were widespread anti-Pakistan demonstrations and some anti-Jamât-e-Islâmi riots in Kashmîr. It might not be an exaggeration to say that between then and 1984 it was difficult to meet anyone in Kashmîr who seriously considered leaving India. Pakistan's stock was at an all time low in the Valley.

The Sheikh continued to introduce more far-reaching reforms, notably the Agrarian Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1978, which put more restrictions



on absentee landlords. During the period 1953-75, the state had been ruled by persons who might not necessarily have been the first choice of the people. Therefore, to keep the public in good humour, the government started selling rice and other rations at a fraction of their real cost, well below the price charged elsewhere in India. Many self-respecting Kashmiris saw this as an attempt to purchase their silence and, thus, peace. Sheikh Abdullah had the courage to abolish this subsidy, at the risk of becoming unpopular.

The Sheikh died on the 8th September, 1982. Radio Pakistan treated his death as a minor item and not the main, or even the second, lead of the day.

### **1983-1989: Dishonouring the people's verdict again**

Upon the Sheikh's death, the NC unanimously elected his son, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, as Chief Minister. The people of all regions of the state enthusiastically endorsed this decision through the elections of June 1983. In Jammû province, the NC, led by Dr. Farooq, won 22% of the votes polled, twice as many as what it had in the previous election. The 1983 elections to the state legislative assembly, like the 1980 elections for the national parliament, were generally considered free and fair.

However, Dr. Farooq's overwhelming majority in the state assembly was of no use. From the beginning of 1984, the local press was full of reports that Delhi was trying to get Dr. Farooq's legislators to defect. On Sunday the 2nd July, 1984, Dr. Farooq went to Gulmarg for a couple of hours with his family and film actress Shabana Azmi. During those few, brief hours his brother-in-law, G.M. Shah, was installed as the Chief Minister of the state. Mr. Shah and a few NC legislators had joined forces with the state unit of the Indian National Congress. Together they managed to put together the number of legislators required to get Dr. Farooq dismissed.

The government knew that there would be a violent response from the people. So it deployed para-military forces all over Srinagar and some major towns. However, such was the people's anger that the forces were not sufficient to control the situation. Between the 2nd July and the end of October, when government offices shifted to Jammû for the winters, several parts of Srinagar could only be ruled by imposing curfew there.

Anti-India sentiments, which had almost vanished in the nine preceding years, made a modest comeback.

### **Alienation**

Added to this was the feeling among Kashmiri Muslims that the Government of India was discriminating against them in matters of employment. G.N. Gauhar writes that in 1976 'I convinced... [the then Union] Minister for



Information and Broadcasting about the disproportionate bulk recruited from the Kashmîrî Pandit minority, constituting less than 5 per cent of the entire population, especially in the State branches of the I&B Ministry.' At that time, of the employees of certain Government of India departments in Kashmîr, 58 per cent were Kashmîrî Pandits and 36 per cent were Muslims. Of these 36 per cent, the biggest chunk, according to Gauhar, were peons and others in the lowest rungs. ('Undue encouragement to Pandits irritated Muslims,' by B.L. Kak, *Daily Excelsior*, Jammû, March 24, 2001. Kak has quoted from a book published by Gauhar in 2001.)

Part of the explanation lay in the difference in literacy levels. The tiny Kashmîrî Pandit community is almost entirely literate. Literacy among the Muslims ranged between Budgâm's 18% and Srînagar's 34% even in 1981. In the period covered by Gauhar (1947 to 1976) it was much worse. And yet there can be no explanation other than Gauhar's for the glaring under-representation of Muslims in post offices, in the office of the Accountant General and several other central departments. In several offices, recruitment was made for considerations other than merit.

In 1990, the greater part of the Kashmîrî Pandit community migrated from Kashmîr to Jammû and other parts of India. The working of post offices in particular was crippled for several years after that.

Employment under the Government of India accounts for a very small fraction of total government employment. The overwhelming bulk is under the state government. Gauhar notes that 'two high-powered committees headed by retired chief justices of India were appointed to probe and suggest measures when the Pandit community alleged discrimination [against the Hindus by the Muslim-majority state government].'

### **Pâkistân makes another effort to stir things up**

Certain elements in the government of Pâkistân started preparing to launch a militant movement in Kashmîr in 1984, if not even before. This is becoming clear from newspaper reports and memoirs published in Pâkistân in the 1990s and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Hashim Qurêshî had hijacked the 'Ganga' to Pâkistân in 1971. He spent the next several years in that country. He writes, 'In 1984, ISI [Pâkistânî intelligence] Generals and Brigadiers approached me [and said], "Get us young people for training from the Valley so that they could fight India on their return."<sup>8</sup>

Qurêshî says that he snubbed the ISI. However, the agency began to train others

8 Qurêshî, Hashim, *Kashmîr: The unveiling of truth!* (1999), Jeddojuhd Publications, 40 Abbot Road, Lahore, Pâkistân.



## The Muslim United Front

By 1986, there was not a single person in Delhi's political establishment who approved of Dr. Farooq's dismissal. So, in March 1986, the Congress, which then ruled India, decided to discontinue its support to Mr. G.M. Shah. For the second time the state came to be ruled by its Governor. Six months later, Governor's Rule was replaced, for the first time in the history of the state, by the rule of the President of India. (The law requires this.) However, President's Rule lasted just two months.

Hilal Ahmad War was one of the founder-members of the Muslim United Front [MUF]. He recalls, 'After the dismissal of G.M. Shah's Govt., the Muslim United Front came into existence in 1986, comprising various anti-India parties. The soul and force of MUF was [the] Isl  mic Students League [ISL]. [The] prominent stalwarts of [the League] were Hilal Ahmad War, Jameel Ahmad War, M. Yaseen Malik, Ashfaq Majeed Wani, Mushtaq 'il Isl  m, Firdous Ahmad, Fayaz Gandroo and Mohd. Hanief Gola. When the MUF decided to contest [the] 1987 Assembly Elections it was ISL that had the honour and capacity of commanding the field of elections...'

## The 1987 Elections

The Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi, and Dr. Farooq Abdullah entered into what is known as the 'Rajiv-Farooq Accord'. On the 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1986, their parties, the Indian National Congress and the National Conference, formed a coalition government in the state. Dr. Abdullah was its head.

In March 1987, the two parties contested elections together, as coalition partners and friends. They won 63 of the 76 seats in the state Assembly.

In the 1983 elections the NC had won almost two-thirds of all the votes cast in the Valley. The Congress got almost all the rest. So, theoretically, if these two parties, both secular and pro-India, were on the same side in an election, they should have polled around 95% of all votes.

That did not happen. Together the two parties received slightly fewer votes than the NC had won on its own in 1983.

The NC-Congress alliance had an unintended effect on the politics of the state. As Mr. Omar Abdullah<sup>9</sup> would later tell BBC World, till then the contest in the state had been between the NC and the Congress. Those who were dissatisfied with the NC would vote for the Congress, and vice versa. Both parties had a secular ideology and both stood for the accession of the state to India. When the two joined hands, those who wanted to vote against either the NC or the Congress now had no secular or pro-India party left to vote for. They expressed their resentment against either or both of these parties by voting for the newly formed MUF.

9 Mr. Omar Abdullah is Dr. Farooq's son and the Sheikh's grandson. He had held important portfolios in the Council of Ministers of the Govt. of India.



The Muslim United Front (MUF) received almost all the anti-NC-Congress votes of the Valley. So, clearly these elections were generally fair. The MUF won only four seats. This was partly because in the Indo-British system the number of seats that a party wins is never in the same proportion as the votes that it gets.

However, doubts were expressed about the fairness of elections to four or five (maybe, six) seats in the Valley. Most analysts feel that even if the NC-Congress alliance had lost all these seats it would still have had a comfortable majority in the state assembly. The MUF actually won four seats. If it had won all the disputed seats, the MUF would have had between eight and ten members in a house of 76. MUF's own supporters feel that they could have won fifteen.

H.A. War writes, '[The Islâmîc Students League] projected Syed [Yusuf Shah] (the present chief of H.M.) on the political scene as the candidate of the MUF from the Amira Kadal constituency. [But the government] resorted to unprecedented rigging and converted [the] defeat [of its candidates] into victory... The result was that the youth of Kashmîr lost faith in normal democratic methods to change the entire undemocratic political scenario in Kashmîr.'

Syed Yusuf Shah went on to become the head of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), under the name of Syed Salâhuiddin. For much of the 1990s, the HM was, in terms of hardware and firepower, the main militant organisation in the state. Yâseen Malik and Ashfâq Majeed Wani, leading members of the ISL, would later join the top leadership of the Jammû and Kashmîr Liberation Front.

### 1989-2003: The Government

In 1988, Kashmîr caught the first glimpse of what was to develop into a violent militant movement. It was masterminded, aided and, after 1995, increasingly manned by Pakistani nationals.

In January 1990, the elected National Conference-Congress coalition resigned office, more than three years ahead of schedule. From then to October 1996, Governors appointed by the Government of India administered the state.

Elections to the state Assembly were next held in September-October 1996. The National Conference, headed by Dr. Farooq Abdullah, won more than two-thirds of the seats.

In the elections of 2002, the people of the state delivered a mixed verdict. The NC, the Congress and the PDP (People's Democratic Party) emerged as the top three political parties, in that order. No party could win enough seats to form a government on its own.



So, the Congress, the PDP and a large number of independent legislators got together to form a coalition government, with Mufti Mohammad Sayeed as the Chief Minister. Mr. Sayeed had been India's Home Minister (the highest rank in the country, after the Prime Minister) in the Janata Dal government of 1990.

### 1989-2004: P  kist  n's Role

The Western media went into a strange denial about Pakistan's role in the violence. The correspondents of at least two major Western publications would come over to my house in S  rinagar, dine with me, tell me about their last visit to Pakistan and give me precise details about Pakistan's involvement. But none of this would get reflected in their reports.

In 1995, some Pakistani nationals, Punjabis at that, abducted six Western tourists. They wanted to get their leader, who was from an elite Lahore family, released from an Indian jail. One of the American hostages gave his captors the slip. This should have been major news and (may be a Hollywood film) all over the world: the gutsy American who got away. He provided details about the identities (and nationality) of the militants. And yet, barring a small newspaper from his hometown, not a single major Western organisation chose to cover his escape or his revelations. One of the aforementioned Western correspondents described the kidnappers as 'Kashmiri separatists' in her reports. And yet it was she who had told me that they were Pakistani Punjabis. She had also given me details about their Lahore-based organisation, down to its exact location.

The BBC carried hundreds of dishonest reports about the goings on, especially in its Urdu radio service, which was then the single most powerful media outlet in Kashmir.<sup>10</sup> The most extreme example of its blatant bias was when the revered T  rar-i-Sharief shrine was burnt. BBC World television showed a clip of a Russian helicopter flying over a town in Chechnya but claimed that it was an Indian helicopter flying over T  rar-i-Sharief. This item, shown several times that morning, was used by the P  kist  ni propaganda

<sup>10</sup> From its inception to the early 1990s, BBC's Urdu radio service was unrivalled in the sway that it held in the Valley: where newspapers are still restricted to S  rinagar and some major towns. Television, too, has a limited reach.

BBC's India correspondent, Mark Tully, had such a legendary stature in the entire state that I once wrote a piece titled 'The Deification of Mark Tully [in J&K]'. But in the 1990s, because of its biased reports, BBC wound up losing the very people that it thought it was pandering to. Its listeners observed such a wide gap between what they actually saw and what they heard on BBC Urdu that they switched, en masse, to the pugnacious, Government of India-run Radio Kashmir. Today, BBC Urdu is the second choice in the Valley: in a field of two.



machinery to spread the rumour that the helicopter had been used to spray gunpowder on the holy shrine, in order to set it on fire later. As part of the same conspiracy, a Jammû-based newspaper<sup>11</sup> carried a similar story the same day. Therefore, BBC's blatant lie was no accidental slip-up as it later tried to claim.

However, by the mid-1990s Western governments started indicating to Pakistan that they did not approve of what it was doing in Kashmîr. Almost on cue, the Western media started carrying exposés of Pakistan's role.

*Time* magazine, for instance, wrote, '[I]n the first half of the 1990s, Kashmîris themselves provided the steam in the anti-Indian militant movement. They were disorganized [No, they weren't-PD.] and willing to murder, but passionate and anxious to plead their nationalist cause with the outside world.

'Today, however, India's charge [that 'Pakistan fomented the entire problem'] rings a lot truer. Despite a decade of denials-Islâmabad insists it provides only diplomatic, moral and political support, not training or tangible aid-Pakistan is fueling [sic] militant activity in Kashmîr. Of the five main militant groups operating in Kashmîr, four are based in Pakistan, where open recruiting and fund raising are commonplace. [The article does not say which the fifth group is-PD.] Training of militants is also done on Pakistani soil. The Pakistani military is deeply involved, especially in the smuggling of anti-India militants across the Line of Control.

'Militant groups have roots all over Pakistan, from their well-equipped training centres in Muzaffarâbâd... and the country's North-West Frontier Province to the nice, middle-class houses in Lahore and Islâmabad. Those houses may look no different from their neighbors [sic] at first glance, but what about the strange antennas on the roofs, the international phone lines and the transient occupants with unkempt hair, camouflage jackets and hiking boots?'" ("Inside Jihad", *TIME*, February 1, 2001.)

### **1980s-2004: The changing pattern of Pâkistân's involvement**

After the murder of Indian diplomat Ravinder Mhâtré and the execution of JKLF activist Maqbool Butt, both in February 1984, the Jammû and Kashmîr Liberation Front (JKLF) occupied the centrestage for several years. Pâkistân's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) supported the JKLF throughout the 1980s.

However, once Pâkistân realised that the JKLF wanted a Kashmîr that was independent of Pâkistân, their ardour for this organisation was suddenly cut short. This was around early 1990. The naïve believe that this was

<sup>11</sup> This newspaper was, till then, the biggest selling English-language newspaper in the state. Again, because of its credibility problem it has dropped to the number four position, rejected by the very audience that it had tried to pander to.



because the ISI preferred the pro-P  kist  n Hizb-ul-Muj  hideen (HM/Hizb) instead. A friend, who is as perceptive a P  kist  n-watcher as he is an ornithologist, says that P  kist  n's support for militancy in Kashmir has always been based on its own internal politics.

In 1990, Ms. Benazir Bhutto was elected the Prime Minister of P  kist  n, with the support of the Jam  'at-  -Ulem  -  -Isl  m (JUI). This party subscribes to a conservative interpretation of Isl  m. It is based in P  kist  n's North West Frontier Province (NWFP). At the time it was led by Maul  n  -Fazlur-Rehman. (The main JUI still is.) Till 1990, it was oriented towards the 'jihad' in Afgh  nist  n alone. Kashmir was not on its horizon. The JUI was too busy setting up Isl  mic *madaras  s* in the NWFP. These seminars produced the students (*t  lib  s*) who went on to form Afgh  nist  n's T  lib  n.

Once the JUI became a part of P  kist  n's ruling coalition, its militant wing, the Harkat ul Muj  hideen (HuM) turned its sights towards Kashmir. After 1992 the ISI pushed members of this organisation into India. During that period the tall and muscular 'guest militants' of the HuM were the stuff of folklore in rural Kashmir.

In 1993, Ms. Bhutto was dismissed from office. After a brief interregnum, Mr. Naw  z Sharief was elected the Prime Minister of P  kist  n. His government withdrew support to the HuM. As a result, militancy began to wane in Kashmir. 1996 was so peaceful that the government was able to conduct two major elections in Kashmir, for the national parliament and the state legislative assembly. There was remarkably little bloodshed during both elections, especially when compared with the elections of 2002.

By 1997, it seemed that happy days were back again. The markets and picnic resorts of Kashmir began to buzz with colour and activity. This bothered the ISI.

Now it was the turn of the Hizb to be patronised in a bigger way than before. Their militants were pushed into India in larger numbers. And yet P  kistan has always been uneasy about the Hizb. On the one hand the Hizb is the 'Kashmiri face of militancy.' On the other, the ISI feels that the Hizb is prone to compromises with the Indian system. Therefore, the ISI decided to weaken, even break up, the Hizb. Al Badr was carved out of it. In 1997, Mr. Sharief returned to power.

Because of its distrust of the Hizb, the ISI now started pushing in the Lashkar-  -Tayyab   (LeT). It remained the ISI's favourite till '9/11' (the 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2001). After that cataclysmic event, P  kist  n had to tone down its fiery statements because the international community was suddenly in no mood to listen.

Meanwhile, the December 1999 hijacking of an Indian Airlines aeroplane had resulted in the release of Maul  n   Masood Azhar and Musht  q Latram from Indian prisons.



The Maulânâ is a Pâkistâni national, a leading right-wing cleric and a favourite of the ISI. He was allowed to create the Jaish-é-Muhammadi (JeM), which functioned directly under the ISI. Latram, on the other hand, is a Kashmîrî and considered unreliable. He was kept confined to Muzaffarâbâd.

However, life is never simple. On the one hand, the Maulânâ is an outstanding orator. He is able to motivate young rural Punjâbis to join the 'jehâd' in Kashmîr like no other can. His JeM is an all-Pâkistâni force, and therefore can be trusted to the hilt. On the other hand, the JeM and the Maulânâ have an extremist Sunni agenda for Pâkistân itself. So, the fact that JeM is all-Pâkistâni and the Maulânâ such a great demagogue worries the Pâkistâni establishment.

That is where things stand in 2004. Cadres of the Hizb, the JeM and the LeT are being sent to Kashmîr, where they operate with complete Pâkistâni support, but varying degrees of trust.

### 1989-2004: The Toll

*Human life* :i) Civilians killed by the militants<sup>iii</sup>: Between January 1990 and the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2003, the militants killed 10,893 non-combatants and injured another 16,479 people. 3,125 civilians were killed during 'cross-firing' between the militants and government forces. Thus 14,018 civilians died during this period.

ii) By religion and profession: Between 1988 and 1997, the militants killed 6,219 Muslims, 719 Hindus, 45 Sikhs and 267 others. All of them were unarmed non-combatants. The Muslims killed were mostly those who had shown pro-India, secular or left-wing leanings. In addition, the militants killed 352 civil servants, 125 pro-India politicians, 10 judges and 10 journalists.

More than 85% of those killed were Muslims. Then why the impression that the militants killed the non-Muslim minorities in particular? That is because Sunni Muslims are killed in one's and two's everyday. The minorities are killed in groups, and that makes news. Of course, the national press of India also needs to do considerable soul-searching about why only massacres of the non-Muslim minorities get played up in the media.

iii) Politicians: Unarmed politicians, especially those in the villages, were a favoured target. Between January 1996 and December 1999, the militants killed 217 political workers, of whom 157 were from the National Conference and 37 belonged to the Indian National Congress. Almost all of these politicians were Muslims. In 2000, the militants killed 35 politicians, and in the first six months of 2001, another 39.

iv) Massacres: In February 2001, the US State Department, in its annual report on human rights, said that a 'concerted campaign of execution-style



killings of civilians by Kashmîrî militant groups [had] begun in 1992' and had resulted in 'several killings of political leaders and party workers.'

v) Militants and government forces killed: In turn, the law enforcement agencies killed 16,163 militants between 1990 and April 2003. The militants killed 2,637 personnel of the security forces (till June 2001). Between 1982 and 1997, government forces killed at least 563 foreign mercenaries (mostly from Afghânistan, Pakistan and POK, but also the odd Sudanese and Saudi Arabian) and arrested another 135 foreign mercenaries. The number of these 'guest militants' started increasing rapidly after that. In 1998, as many as 319 foreign mercenaries were killed. The next year the number declined somewhat to 305, but in 2000, it zoomed to 436. In the first six months of 2001 the Indian forces killed 276 foreign terrorists.

Because of all the deaths that have taken place in Kashmîr, a number of households are now headed by women.

*Human Rights:* Some officers and soldiers of the various Indian forces posted in Kashmîr committed human rights violations/ excesses against the people. Some of the charges levelled against the forces were false. However, other allegations were found true, beyond doubt. Between January 1990 and June 1999, the government took action against 270 officers and soldiers for human rights violations. Of these 59 were from the Indian Army, 141 from the Border Security Force and 70 from the Central Reserve Police Force. 94 of these men were sent to jail, 22 others were dismissed from government service, 16 were demoted in rank, and 73 were arrested or placed under suspension pending a court martial. Other departmental penalties were imposed on 65 others.

*Mass Migration:* Some 49,000 Hindu and Sikh families fled the Valley of Kashmîr, most of them between January and May 1990. Less noticed was the migration of Kashmîrî Muslims: 2,303 such families agreed to register as migrants in Jammû. Many others migrated to Jammû, Delhi and beyond but did not register. They were fearful for the lives of their relatives still living in Kashmîr.

*Voluntary Migration:* A significant development took place in the 1990s. Scores of well-to-do Kashmîrî Muslims started buying up property in the rest of India, at places as far apart as Jaipur and Goa and as deep south as Bangalore and Kovalam (Kerala). Hundreds, perhaps over a thousand, middle-class Kashmîrî Muslim families set up home in Delhi. In some cases this was a second, winter-home. In others, it was a year-round home for the children's education. Hundreds of Muslim businessmen shifted base (especially the manufacture of carpets) to Delhi. When tourism in the Valley collapsed (between 1990 and 1996), people from the tourist trade in Kashmîr went to Jaipur, Goa, Agra and Kovalam, where they now have a substantial presence.



Thousands of Kashmîrî Muslims, including those from the lower middle-classes, built houses, mainly winter-homes, on the outskirts of Jammû city.

*Attitudes* began to harden in the 1990s. A liberal friend from Iran commented, 'What we [in Iran] started in 1978 travelled first to Afghânistan and then to Pakistan before finally reaching Kashmîr.'

The militants burnt down Srinagar's plushest cinema hall. They forced the remaining cinemas to shut down. They also banned cable television. In 1989, a decree was issued by a group of militant women ordering all Muslim women to wear the veil. Non-Muslim women were asked to distinguish their religious identity by applying a *bindi* ('dot') on their foreheads. Female militants threw acid on the face of a Muslim girl who did not wear the veil. Kashmîr's celebrated and once-thriving (country-) clubs were shut down. So were all shops and bars that served alcohol (this being the one edict of the militants that is after my own heart). Towards the end of the 1990s, a Muslim schoolgirl was shot in the legs for the crime of wearing jeans (i.e. Western clothes).

The ban on cinema halls and the collapse of tourism threw tens of thousands of people out of work. People started staying indoors after dusk. A society where violent crimes were almost unheard of till 1989 was suddenly brutalised-and militarised.

*The militarisation of society:* The Mughals took all of three years (1586-89) to establish their authority in Kashmîr. They banned the possession of all kinds of weapons: including long kitchen knives. They searched every house (especially basements) where they thought they might find weapons. By 1589, there wasn't a single weapon left in private hands in the plains of Kashmîr. (The hills were similarly rid of weapons a few years later.)

From 1589 to 1989 Kashmîr was a uniquely peaceful society. Then suddenly a friendly neighbour flooded Kashmîr with Kalashnikovs, grenades and landmines. Very few of these weapons were used against the various forces of the government. As the statistics given earlier in this section show, most of those who were killed were ordinary civilians, and not soldiers, policemen or even militants.

Guns have been used to settle private disputes in Pâkistân's Punjab and Frontier Provinces for several centuries now. Even Indian Punjab and Western Uttar Pradesh have known some armed violence between individuals. The 1990s brought this culture to Kashmîr. Militants who had surrendered themselves to the authorities, or had otherwise given up militancy, became a major social phenomenon. They knew how to use guns. There was no shortage of ammunition. So they started using their newfound skills to grab land, mow down forests, extort money and kidnap young women.



*Patience:* All this has made the Kashmiris an incredibly patient people. A colleague who looks after Haj pilgrims from all over India told me that pilgrims from Kashmir were the best-behaved group at Mecca. Children who grew up during the 1990s are more disciplined, responsible and well-behaved than their peers elsewhere. Rural people now tend to put up with far more bullying from those in authority than ever before. All forms of authority.

For example, when militants kill an innocent non-combatant, the government is supposed to give his family Rs.1 lakh (Rs.100,000) and a government job. In hundreds of cases the bereaved family would helplessly shell out a third of the cash grant to the officials who processed their case. And the promised job would be a pie in the sky unless they shelled out another third. Corruption is a fact of life in many parts of the world. It's always been there in Kashmir, too. But this profiting from tragedy, this further immiserisation of an already shattered people, is a gift of the 1990s.

Apart from human life, the biggest casualty of this unfortunate phase has been the loss of human dignity. Again, because of all kinds of tyrants.

In the autumn of 1989, some activists of pro-India parties, especially the National Conference and the Congress, were killed. It all began when Muhammad Yusuf Halwai, an NC worker, was killed for having dared to keep the lights of his house on on India's Independence Day (the 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1989). This sent shivers down the spines of other junior pro-India politicians. (The senior ones received some kind of security. However, they were sometimes killed despite the security: and despite having shifted to Jammû.)

The Srinagar newspapers of September and October 1989 were filled with two kinds of advertisements. The parents of young newly-weds started informing their guests that the wedding feast of their child had been postponed from some weekday midnight to the afternoon of some holiday: because nights were, for the first time in the history of Kashmir, no longer safe. (See also the chapter on 'The Wazwan'.)

The other kind of advertisement was far more chilling. It would bear the headline '*Lâ tâ'aluqûi kâ izhâr*' ('an expression of disassociation'). The jittery text would read somewhat like this, 'I, Ramzan Bhat, son of Ali Muhammad Bhat,<sup>12</sup> swear that neither I nor my father nor any member of my family is or has ever been a member of the National Conference or the Congress. People who have been making this allegation are misinformed [or are out to get me].' The sub-text, often unstated, would invariably be, 'Therefore, I beg you, please leave me alone, please do not kill me.'

12 Both names are composites and, hence, fictitious.



This went on for weeks. The text of the advertisements would be almost identical. Only the name of the abject advertiser would change. Till, one day, I noticed a totally different kind of plea: 'It is true that my family and I have always supported [political party X]. That was a mistake and I beg to be forgiven for it. I have corrected my ways and have resigned from that party.' Soon, this kind of advertisement became the norm. The subtext, however, remained the same, 'I beg you, please do not kill me.'

*Mental health:* A college lecturer from Guwahati, a Muslim who was in Srinagar to attend a conference, found his Kashmîrî peers 'brooding.' It was wrong of him to generalise. Besides, he overstated the case. But the fact remains that during the 1990s, the Kashmiris ceased to be as cheerful and confident about the future as they were before, say, 1989. The incidence of mental illness and depression increased considerably.

The rate of depression 'jumped from a mere 2.4 per cent prior to militancy, to a whopping 44 per cent in [the year 2000],' Rashme Sehgal, quoting government doctors, reported in *The Times of India* (18 Nov., 2001). She added that a chemist told her that eight per cent of the (local) population was on anti-depressants.

Separate studies conducted in Jammû on the migrant Kashmîrî Pandits showed a noticeable lowering of their life-expectancy and a sharp decline in their ability to bear children. Both problems were attributed to stress.

*Education:* Because of disturbed conditions at home, Kashmîrî Muslim students started seeking admission to colleges outside the state. Those with good grades went to Delhi. The children of the rich favoured the medical and engineering colleges of Manipal and Pune. Some even sent their children to study at hole-in-the-wall training institutes in Jammû, a city that they would, till 1989, deride for its educational and intellectual backwardness.

Districts that stayed away from militancy reaped the peace dividend. The most notable of these was overwhelmingly Muslim Kargil (in Ladâkh). Educational standards and levels of literacy zoomed upwards in Jammû and Kathuâ (both in Jammû province) as well as in Leh and Kargil (both in Ladâkh). Those in militancy-hit Kashmîr, too, improved, but not as rapidly as in Jammû and Ladâkh. (See also the chapter 'The people of Kashmîr.')

The relative ranks of four of the six districts of the Valley, including Srinagar itself, declined. The other two were static. Budgâm's position at the bottom, for instance, remained unchanged.

Thanks to determined efforts by the government, despite militancy the education sector of the state as a whole moved up from the 13<sup>th</sup> rank that it had occupied among 27 Indian states in 1991, to the 9<sup>th</sup> position in 2001. This was the biggest upward movement for any state in the 1990s. (Also see the mention of schools in 'The economy')



Education, as we know, is very different from literacy. In the latter regard the state is still the second worst in the country, with a literacy level (53.57%) only slightly higher than to Pākistān's.<sup>13</sup>

*Religion:* Kashmīrī Muslims-like Muslims in the rest of India, Pākistān, Afghānistān, Central Asia and North Africa – have enormous faith in shrines dedicated to saints and mystics. They believe that God answers prayers offered at such shrines. The Islāmīc position is that there can be no intermediaries between the devotee and God. Conservative Muslims (e.g. the Deobāndīs of South Asia) believe that by praying at shrines devotees are inviting the patron saint of that shrine to be an intermediary.

Therefore, an attempt was made to discourage Kashmīrī Muslims from going to the tombs and shrines of saints. In 1994, some militants threatened to use force at Aish Muqām against those who continued to participate in that venerable shrine's picturesque *urs*.

That was when the Kashmīrīs decided to defy the militants. The Aish Muqām shrine is too well-loved, and its annual *urs* much too popular, for the people to have accepted this particular diktat of the fundamentalists. The *zool* (torchlight) celebrations took place as scheduled. The people came out in large numbers and went ahead with the celebrations. This probably was the first major defiance of the militants by the people. The militants knew better than to carry out their threat of violence against those who had disobeyed.

The Islāmīc position is that there were several (1,24,000, to be precise) prophets before Hazrat Muhammad, peace be upon him, but there can be no prophet *after* him. The Ahmediyas consider themselves Muslims and, indeed, are Muslims-in every respect except this. In September 1997, 110 Sunni *ulemas* (learned clerics) of Kashmīr decreed that the members of this tiny sect were not Muslims. In this respect, too, right-wing attitudes that emanated from Pakistan had finally reached Kashmīr. (In 1997 there were an estimated 3,000 Ahmediyas in Kashmīr: in Srinagar, Shopian, Kulgam and Bandiporā.) At least one Srinagar newspaper and some civic groups have been pressurising the government to prevent Ahmediyas from going on the Haj pilgrimage.

As the academics would put it, the discourse has got radicalised.

*Social Changes:* Many other fiats of the militants, too, had to be modified. After a while the Kashmīrīs were allowed to watch some channels on cable television. But MTV and the like were specifically excluded.

13 In 2001, 46% of Pākistān's children were enrolled in schools, vs. India's 76%. Source: Unicef's *The State of the World's Children*, 2003.



By late 1992, women were no longer forced to wear the full veil. But they took to covering at least their heads. Besides, the head-to-toes *burqa*, which Sheikh Abdullah and other reformers had struggled so hard to banish, made a modest comeback. In 2001, there was another violent attempt to get women behind the veil.

Each ban left a residue behind, even after its withdrawal. These bans were like the waves of an ocean. Waves hit the shore and then recede. However, they leave a film of water behind on the shore.

Before 1989, not a single teenaged girl from any of Srinagar's elite schools would be found wearing an Iran-style headscarf. They would be afraid of ridicule from their peers. Kashmir has its own headscarves for women but only grasscutters wear them in the urban areas. By the turn of the century, a number of young women, including the 'convent-educated' elite, were voluntarily wearing *burqâs*, *abâyâs* (loose gowns with a covering for the head) and Iran-style headscarves.

In the 1990s, many Kashmiris, started considering it un-Islamic to visit the shrines of saints. Before 1989, few would dare express such sentiments, for fear of offending the majority.

The owner of one of Srinagar's grandest cinemas announced to his family in the mid-1990s that he had sinned by having run a cinema all his life. He decided to convert his cinema (which the militants had shut down anyway) into a hospital instead.

The people have, since 1989, become more interested in religion. Their faith is still very gentle, liberal and introspective. But religion can now be seen at places where it was not visible before: on the annual days of schools, in the names of schools, at political rallies, in the English-language press, in the best-seller lists of books and CDs and on local cable television.

*Conversions to Christianity:* In the year 2003, reports began to appear in the Srinagar press to the effect that almost twelve thousand Kashmiri Muslims had converted to Christianity in the immediately preceding years.

The figure of twelve thousand is certainly an over-statement. In Srinagar district, for instance, a top district official was able to identify only eight individuals who had converted in the first few years of the new century. In Pulwâmâ, too, only a similar figure could be confirmed. The total for the entire Valley would perhaps be a few hundred.<sup>14</sup> Whatever the actual figure, the trend is important enough to have become a matter of continuing concern for the thinking classes of the Valley.

What is certain is that sixteen known groups of missionaries are active in Kashmir. Each has a well-defined area of operation. One of them, Operation Gape, for instance, concentrates on former militants. Others work with specific communities and ethnic groups. There is one group for the Gujjars



and Bakerwâls, another for the boatmen, and so on. In addition, there are several missionary schools and Christian NGOs (non-governmental organisations) in the Valley.

Analysts like S.A. Zia<sup>14</sup> feel that the cause of this trend is 'more economic than spiritual... [The converts] find it easier [to enter] influential echelons, foreign domains and elite colleges.' However, Zia also cites the magazine *Christianity Today*, which has quoted a Kashmiri student as saying, 'I am interested in this [the Christian] religion. I hate violence. I hate fundamentalists in Islâm. I come here to seek peace.'

Zia is right on both counts. A young journalist whom I used to know got a job in the West a few years after his conversion. Some officers investigated these conversions in the wake of the newspaper reports. They concluded that the two main reasons why some Muslims had converted to Christianity were: 'i) [The] general public has suffered badly due to militancy and requires urgent financial assistance. ii) [The] youth have witnessed an era of violence [which is] contrary to peace as preached by the Sûfis, who spread Islâm in Kashmîr.'

*Property:* When first time visitors come to Kashmîr, they expect to find bombed out houses, craters on roads, and shops with bare shelves. Why don't they find all this?

When the whole thing began, in 1989, the militants' attacks were mostly vegetarian. Instead of killing people, they would blow up government-run schools (for spreading modern values) and bridges (to slow down army vehicles).<sup>14</sup> We in the government decided that for every school that the militants destroyed, we would build two (or more) new schools. For a while it worked. But by early 1990 the militants' ability to destroy began to outstrip (and vastly so) our ability to rebuild.

But I think you've got the point. The reason why Kashmîr is not full of craters is because the government keeps rebuilding much of what is destroyed.

Between 1988 and 1997, the militants burned down schools (758 of them), bridges (243) and hospitals (nine). They also destroyed 1,264 other government-owned buildings, 9,309 private houses and 1,659 private shops. Almost all of what they razed to the ground had been built between 1947 and 1989. Tourist bungalows constructed painstakingly over the decades in the remotest of hills were particularly favourite targets, including a heritage, early 20<sup>th</sup> century, royal guest-house in Qazigund.

<sup>14</sup> The next morning Pākistān Television would report that some Indian soldiers or policemen had bombed that empty school or bridge. It makes no sense why an Indian force would want to destroy something built with government funds: and which would later have to be rebuilt with even more government funds.



Between 1947 and 1991, the state had built the 5<sup>th</sup> best infrastructure in all of India. After a decade of militancy the state dropped to no. 10 in 2001. This was the biggest drop in rank for any Indian state during that period.

Developmental activities in the Valley slowed down, especially in the first five or six years of militancy.

*The Economy:* When Amy Waldman of *The New York Times* visited Kashmir in the summer of 2002, she noticed that the road from the airport into Srinagar was 'lined with mansions, many of them brand new, that would not look out of place in Westchester County.' She later learnt that 'There [were] 21,000 cars in Srinagar alone — a fivefold increase from 1990. There were 560 private schools in the valley seven years ago; there are 1,360 now.' Waldman then researched the Jammū and Kashmīr Bank and called it 'the most successful institution in the state and the most vivid emblem of Kashmir's boom. Since militancy began, its deposits have grown from \$458 million to \$2.29 billion.' Her visits to the jewellery shops of Srinagar revealed a similar spurt in affluence.

Waldman's observations were extremely perceptive. Despite thirteen years of militancy, the State was the country's eighth best consumer market even in 2001. Of course, before militancy its rank had been higher still: the state had ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in 1991. Had Waldman been able to compare Kashmir's legendary wedding feasts before and after militancy, she would have noticed that the lavishness of the feast had increased further in the 1990s. Mineral water bottles, soft drinks and bigger portions of curd (yoghurt) are only three of the new items that were added during this period.

So, has Kashmir been going through militancy or an economic boom?

The answer is: both. The impact of militancy on the economy has been mixed-and seemingly contradictory. Only two sectors of the economy actually hit the reverse gear: tourism and industry. Till 1989, tourism was not only the biggest sector after agriculture-horticulture, but also the biggest urban employer. Between 1990 and 1996, tourism in the Valley was close to zero. However, it started reviving in 1997. Early 1999 was a boom year, when there weren't enough beds to cope with the rush of tourists. After the Kargil war of 1999, tourism slumped again.

Day-to-day business in Kashmir also suffered. Friday is the Islāmīc Sabbath. However, secular Kashmir has chosen to observe its weekly holiday on Sundays. Between 1990 and 1996 (and, sometimes, after 1996 as well), militants would ensure that shops were shut on Fridays (in addition to Sundays). They would frequently ask businessmen to pull down their shutters on other days, too, to show the world that at least the business community obeyed their orders. According to one estimate, during the twelve years between late 1989 and 2001, the militants were able to shut businesses down for the equivalent of three and a half years. (The *Aftāb*, 30 May,



2002) According to statistics available with the government, the militants asked the private sector (including hawkers and porters) to stop work on 1,356 days between January 1990 and the 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2003.

Agriculture, which is the mainstay of the economy, did not actually decline, but its growth could not match that of the rest of India. The state's agriculture ranked no.9 in 1991, but dropped to no.14 in 2001.<sup>11</sup>

As soon as militancy started, industry vanished. In 1991, J&K was India's second most attractive state for investment. (This factoid, published in *India Today*, came as a surprise even to me.) Thanks to militancy, by 2001 its appeal to investors had dropped to no.12. This was the biggest decline for any state in India.

Then why does Kashmir's economy still look quite good?

Generous Government of India funding ensured that militancy did not push Kashmir's economy back. However, militancy did retard Kashmir's economic growth. The 1990s were a decade when India's economy grew at around 6% a year. Kashmir did not share this post-1992 boom. For the first time after its accession to India, Kashmir's economy grew at a rate that, at 4.3% a year, was lower than that of India as a whole.

Still, the point is that in the 1990s, far from contracting, the economy of the state actually grew. The state's per capita income in 1996-97 was 13<sup>th</sup> among Indian states. It had thus fallen from the no. 9 position that it had occupied in 1991, but was still infinitely better than the close-to-the-bottom position that it had in 1947.<sup>15</sup> By 2001, it had bounced back a bit: to the 11<sup>th</sup> rank.

The one thing that contracted in the '90s, and dramatically so, was poverty. By the end of the decade the state had the lowest poverty ratio in all of India: 3.5%. By way of comparison, this ratio is 26.1% for India as a whole and 7.6% in neighbouring, high-performing Himachal Pradesh. An ample infusion of funds from the rest of India helped.

In 1991, the Government of India decided that 90% of its aid to the state would be a grant and only 10% a loan. This was a reversal of the position that had obtained since 1969, when 70% was a loan and 30% a grant. In 2001, Jammu & Kashmir received the fourth highest per capita economic assistance from the Government of India: Rs.6,000 crore (\$1.27 billion),<sup>16</sup>

15 The state's own gross domestic product, at Rs.8,680 crore (\$1.84 billion), was the third lowest among India's 19 major states even in 2001. And yet, as we have seen, it is among the best consumer markets in India. What explains the huge difference? There can be no doubts about the answer.

16 By way of comparison, Pākistān, with a population that is 28 times as big as that of the Valley, and 14.4 times bigger than the entire State, receives \$703 million a year as foreign aid from all international donors put together. Source: Unicef's *The State of the World's Children*, 2003.



or Rs.6,000 for every man, woman and child every year. (This much is official. My own estimate is that in 1990 the state was no. 8 in terms of per capita 'plan' assistance. It wasn't always so. In 1969, there were just three 'special category' states. J&K was one of the three. However, by 1990, the list had swelled enormously. Some of the other states were given the 90:10 ratio. J&K was no longer in the top three. The decision of 1991 took the state back to the privileged position that it had occupied in 1969.)

'So, where does all this Government of India money go?' my socialite friends often ask. Into the pockets of a few corrupt officials? The answer is, 'No,' despite all the visible indicators of corruption. The bulk of this money goes into the salaries of 3.5 lakh (0.35 million) government servants. Almost every 22nd person in the Valley is a civil servant or an employee of the public sector. And then there is electricity. Between a quarter and a fifth of what the Centre gives the State goes into 'subsidising' the power consumed by the people.

Thus, central funds are distributed quite evenly among the people. The ultimate proof of this is the amount of mutton that the state purchases, mainly from Rajasthan. The state has the country's highest per capita meat consumption, and one of the highest in the world. (See the chapter on 'The Wazwan'.)

As a result, the state had the third best health standards in the country in 2001, up from an already impressive 6<sup>th</sup> position in 1991. All this points to an evenness in the spread of prosperity.

*Pakistan's Economy:* The one economy that went into a sharp decline during the 1990s was Pakistan's. In the 1970s, India's GDP grew by a mere 2.9% a year, compared with Pakistan's 4.8%. Even in the 1980s, Pakistan's GDP grew slightly faster (6.1% vs. India's 5.8%). However, during the decade that it fuelled death and destruction in Kashmîr, especially after 1996, Pakistan's economic growth was no match for India's. Example: In 1996-97 India's GDP increased by 7.8% vs Pakistan's 1.9%. By the end of the decade, Pakistan had settled for a growth rate around half of India's- and a lower per capita income.

Stratfor (Strategic Forecasting), a Washington-based think-tank, wrote<sup>vii</sup> that Pākistân's per capita income declined from \$473 in 1998 to \$443 (in early 2003).<sup>17</sup> The percentage of Pākistân's population living below the poverty line grew from 25% to 'fully one-third' (around 33%) during the same period.

<sup>17</sup> Unicef paints an even bleaker picture in its report *The State of the World's Children*, 2003. It puts Pākistân's per capita income at just \$420 vs. India's \$460. That once prosperous and well-fed country started lagging behind even in terms of nutrition and life expectancy (60 years vs. India's 64).



The cost of funding militancy in Kashmir can't be responsible. It costs Pakistan less to finance three thousand militants at a time than India spends on one of the 14 districts of the State. The only explanation (apart from divine retribution) is that by focussing all its energy on creating mayhem in Kashmir, Pakistan neglected its own economy (and polity and society).

### 2003-2004: Attempts at peace

In 2003, India and P  kist  n made a fresh bid for peace. Stratfor suggested that 'Although P  kist  n's attempts to improve relations with its neighbors [sic], especially India, [are] motivated by security concerns, economics is the primary driver behind its actions.' It added, '... any progress in smoothing relations with India would significantly improve P  kist  n's attractiveness to foreign investors and its chances of growing its economy internally.'<sup>viii</sup>

Whatever be the reason, let us hope that this time around the attempts at Indo-Pak reconciliation result in lasting peace for the people of Kashmir and South Asia.

### References

- i. 'Two British officers played anti-India role,' *Daily Excelsior*, Nov 2/ 3 (year not clear: perhaps 2001 or 2002; I got this from their website; the dateline is Nov. 2, so the newspaper would be dated Nov. 3.) The *Daily Excelsior* has, in turn, quoted the *Dawn*, Karachi.
- ii. Also from 'Two British officers played anti-India role,' *Daily Excelsior*, Nov 2/ 3, 200?.
- iii. The statistics on 'Human Life' have been gathered from diverse sources: mainly information tabled in the national Parliament and the state legislature. An attempt has been made to update all statistics to May 2003. However, this has not been possible in all cases.
- iv. Hassan Zainagairi has a similar assessment regarding the number of converts. *The base intent III*, Greater Kashmir, 26 May 2003. As the title of his article suggests, he feels that Christian missionaries have effected conversions through inducements.
- v. "Christian conversion: Half-baked recycling" by S.A. Zia, *Greater Kashmir*, April 26, 2003.
- vi. "India's Best and Worst States", *India Today*, May 19, 2003. Most comparisons between 1991 and 2001, made in this section of our book, have been taken from this source.
- vii. 'Pak's peace moves driven by economic considerations,' a UNI item published in the *Daily Excelsior*, Jammu, 20 May, 2003.
- viii. Both quotes are from 'Pak's peace moves driven by economic considerations,' *Daily Excelsior*, Jammu, 20 May, 2003.



## Places of Tourist Interest







### 3

## The National Highway Srinagar to Ladâkh

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There are only three civil airports in the state: at Srinagar, Jammû and Leh. Trains ply on just one, brief stretch in the state: that between Lakhanpur and Jammû, via Kathua, Samba, Bari Brahmana and Hiranagar. An extremely good way to travel within the valley of Kashnîr would be by boat on River Jehlum. That's how people would travel till the first decade of the twentieth century. However, once roads got built, boats began to be seen as primitive and slow.

Virtually the only way to travel within the state is by road. National Highway 1A runs from Lakhanpur to well beyond Leh. Lakhanpur is a township in Jammû, where the state meets the Punjab.

### Srinagar-Kargil-Leh

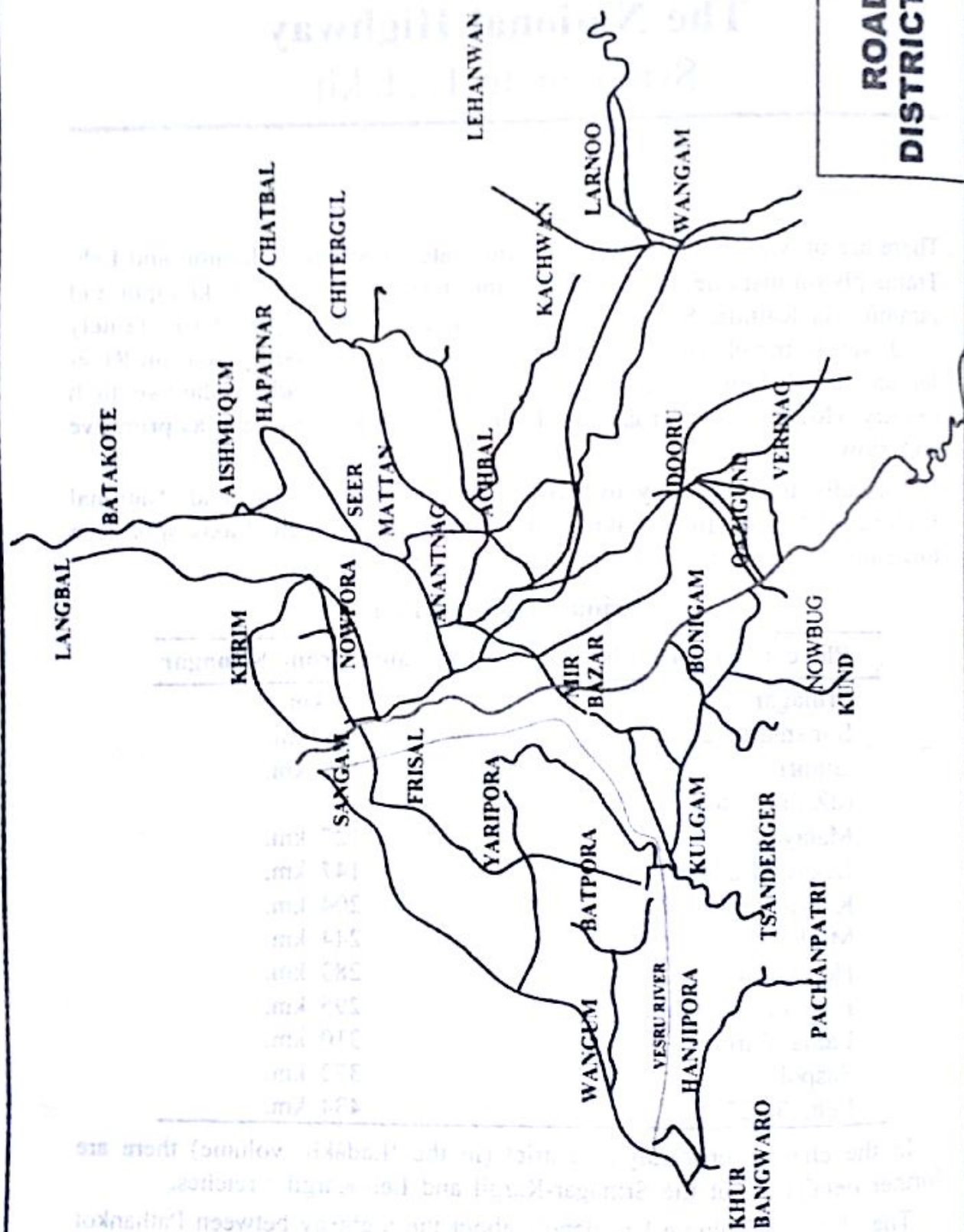
Place (with altitude)	Distance from Srinagar
Srinagar	0 km.
Sonamarg, 2,740m.	84 km.
Gumri	110 km.
(dZoji La top: 3,529m.)	
Matayan	127 km.
Drass, 3,230m.	147 km.
Kargil 2,675-2,740m.	204 km.
Mulbekh 3,230m.	244 km.
Heris Kut	283 km.
Fatu La, 4,108m.	295 km.
Lama Yuru	310 km.
Saspol	372 km.
Leh, 3,522m.	434 km.

In the chapter on 'Kargil' district (in the 'Ladâkh' volume) there are further details about the Srinagar-Kargil and Leh-Kargil stretches.

The 'Jammû' volume had details about the highway between Pathankot (Punjab) and Srinagar: especially what to *eat en route*.



# ROAD MAP OF DISTRICT ANANTNAG





## 4

### Ânañtnâg

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#### The vital statistics

The southernmost district of the Valley, Ânañtnâg is considered the granary of Kashmir. It has an area of 3,984 sq.km., of which 2,398 sq.km. are forests. Its population was estimated at 8.51 lakh (0.8 million) in 1991, of which 89% live in villages. It has 645 villages, of which 19 are uninhabited, as well as eight towns. All its villages have electric connections as well as facilities for piped drinking water. Some 23.1% of its people were literate in 1981. Agricultural crops are sown on 0.74 lakh hectares in the district, of which 0.51 lakh hectares are irrigated. Orchards occupy another 0.27 lakh hectares.

1981 census figures: Total population-6,56,352; Muslims-6,27,721; Hindus-24,731; Sikhs-3,863.

2001 census: Population: 11,61,855; literacy: 43.65%.

#### Getting there

If you are driving up from Jammû you will skim the outer limits of Ânañtnâg town 55 kn., before you reach Srînagar. You will pass through the town itself when you go to Mattan, Martand or Aish Muqâm and probably when you go to Pahalgâm, too. Most pilgrims to Sri Amarnâth ji go through Ânañtnâg town.

#### History

The town of Ânañtnâg (lit.: 'endless' or 'countless' springs) was probably named after the Seesha, a spring considered holy by the Hindus. The Seesha is at the southern end of the town. Anant (also known as Shesh), the snake with many heads, is supposed to live in it.



'Nag' means 'cobra' in most parts of India. In Kashmir it also means 'spring (of water)'. Anant certainly refers to the serpent on which the Hindu God Sri Vishnu rests. So, we have a nice set of meanings here: Anant Nag means 'Anant, the serpent of Lord Vishnu' and also 'the endless springs.' Both meanings are equally valid and both seem to have been intended. The district gets its name from the town.

The town is the second biggest in the Valley. It was renamed Islâmad by Emperor Aurangzeb, after Islâm Khân, who was his governor in 1664-65 and who had got a garden constructed for the Mughal emperor. 'Islâm Khân' was the title given to the general, who was born Mîr Zia-ud-Din Hussain Badakhshi, after he defeated Raja Jaswant Singh in central India. More importantly, the Mîr had suppressed Aurangzeb's elder brother, Dara Shikoh, in a civil war between the two brothers and their supporters. Till then Dara had been the heir apparent to their father's throne. It was because of this that Aurangzeb renamed Ânañtnâg after his general and not, as is believed, because Khân had built the aforesaid garden.

During the reign of Gulab Singh, the Dogrâ Mahârâjâ, the town's name reverted to Ânañtnâg. However, at the popular level the Mughal name is still used. In ancient times the town was called Anyech. In the Dogrâ era, indeed till the 1940s, Srinagar city was a part of this district. (Bâramullâ was the only other district in the Valley then.)

The Martand temple is the only surviving monument of the ancient period in the district. It is currently in ruins. Its central building, court and a colonnade are all that remain.

## Shrines

### Hindu

The holy cave of **Amarnâth ji** is the best known shrine of the district and the one that attracts the largest number of pilgrims to the Valley. The annual pilgrimage reaches its high point on the first full moon night of August (rarely in late July): on the day when much of India celebrates Raksha Bandhan. (See the chapter on 'The Amarnâth Yatra'.)

**Devsar:** An old and important temple in Devsar is dedicated to the goddess Shri Tripura Sundari, called Khanabarani by the Kashmiri Pandits of the village. On the 4<sup>th</sup> day of Magh (roughly the 19<sup>th</sup> January) a fair is held in honour of the deity.

**Kother** (also Kothair): 5 km. from the Achabal gardens. According to a legend there was a king in South India who sprouted horns on his head. The horns fell off only after the king had had a bath in a pond at Kother. In gratitude he built a reservoir around the pond and a temple next to it. The



ruins of both are still extant. However, their architecture is much like that of the other ancient ruins of the Valley.

There is iron-ore near the village.

**Martand:** (5,817 feet above the sea level) The temple is 64 km. from Srinagar and around 7 km. from Ânañtnâg town. It is a brief diversion from the road to Pahalgâm; and 3 km. from the Martand pilgrimage at Mattan. Easily the grandest of Kashmîr's ancient ruins, this temple complex is supposed to belong to 'the era of the Pandavas and Kauravas'. But so are all the other ancient monuments of Kashmîr and Jammû. (Many historians feel that the tendency among the general public to date every ancient monument to the Mahabharata era is due to the fact that precise dates are not available. Besides, 'the era of the Pandavas and Kauravas' is really the North Indian expression for the two thousand years or so before the Christian era—and perhaps a few centuries afterwards as well.)

In this particular case, Hindu priests call the temple 'the house of the Pandus' or "Pandu Lari". The common man calls it the *Martand*, or Sun, Temple. The temple was probably dedicated to the sun. However, that is not certain. Some historians claim that it was a Shiva temple. Bakaya points out, 'The four figures represent Lokesvara, Barov, Nataraja and Trimurti with a female figure in swimming attire, symbolically representing Ganga.'

British colonial historians were of the opinion that the foundations of the temple were laid between A.D. 370 and 500. The *Rājātaraṅginī* says that King Ranaditya (5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) built the temple, his queen Amrita Prabha built the smaller chapels on the side and Lalitaditya the colonnade. Many modern historians, however, dispute both these versions and credit King Lalitaditya Muktapida (A.D. 725-753 or 669-739) with the authorship of the temple. Jonaraja says that King Sikander caused damage to the temple.

The temple has been built atop a *karewa*. Younghusband (19<sup>th</sup> century) raved about the 'sublime site' of the temple. He said that it was 'finer than the site of the Parthenon or of the Taj, or of St. Peter's or of the Escorial. We might take it as the representative or rather the culmination of all the rest and by it we may judge Kashmîr people at their best.' (Personally I feel that Parihaspora represents the best of ancient Kashmîr. However, only the grand foundations of that temple survive, see 'Bârâmulâ' district.)

The Martand temple itself is on flat land. There are tall mountains behind, a lawn all around and sloping ground in front.

Its architecture consists of what The *Gazetteer* calls bold strokes and outlines, solid walls and an absence of 'petty confused details'. The pillars of the colonnade around the temple are fluted. Even British historians felt that it was not certain if it was built as a 'sun temple' or was later converted into one by a different sub-sect of Hindus. Younghusband adds,



'(The) temple (is) second only to Egyptians in massiveness and strength and to the Greeks in elegance and grace. It is built of immense rectilinear blocks of limestone, betraying strength and durability... The ruins (220' x 142') consist of a lofty central edifice, which are [sic] calculated to have been not less than 75 ft. with a small detached shrine on either side of the entrance, and of a quadrangular courtyard of imposing dimensions surrounded by colonnades of 84 columns, being the multiple of number of days in a week with the number of signs in the Zodiac. Water was brought to it by a canal from the [Lidder].'

There certainly are some Greek features in the architecture of Martand, Nârâ Nâg and Awantiporâ, especially the pillars and the triangular pediment atop the pillars in the façade. However, their layout, conception and general framework is almost identical to that of temples like Angkor Vat (Cambodia).

*The Martand Cave Festival:* 'A festival is held at the Martand cave 'during Malamâs and Bânamâs... [Kashmîrî Pandits] from all over the district assemble at the cave on these days and perform religious rites. The date for Banamas is determined according to the solar system and Malamas on the basis of lunar months.

'The temple at Bhawan [nearby Mattan] also attracts pilgrims during Banamas and Malamas. These celebrations are known as 'Vijay Saptami'.' (From an old government document.)

**Mattan** (or B(h)awan): 61 km. from Srinagar or 6 km. east of Ânañtnâg. This pilgrim village is just off the road that leads to Pahalgâm. It has traditionally been a major Hindu pilgrimage. Since ancient times, Lord Vishnu Surya has been worshipped here in his Martand manifestation. The word 'Mattan' is an abbreviation of 'Martand.'

The waters of a sacred spring collect in a large tank in which fish abound. There are temples—and a gurudwara—around this tank. It is said that Surya, the Sun god, was born to Aditi from a lifeless egg called Martand. Aditi was the wife of Kashyap, the saint from whom Kashmir probably takes its name. Surya was her thirteenth child. The spring at Mattan is connected with this legend.

The devont believe that the Amarnâth ji yatra is completed only after the fish in the tank at Mattan are fed atta (wheat flour) on the way back from the Holy Cave.

As at Hrishikesh or Benares (both in Central India), Mattan used to have *pandas*—Brâhmins—who record family-trees and genealogical tables for their clients. Many of these *pandas* migrated to Jammû in 1990 but some remain. Dormitory-type accommodation is available at Mattan.

Arora notes, 'A few furlongs ahead of Mattan on [the] Pahalgâm road is a cave situated on a hill spur a little distance up to the right from the road. This is said to be 200 feet long and to contain the remains of a recluse.'



Other important Hindu shrines in the district include the temples at Bijbehara, Akingam, Lukbavan (Luk Bhavani), Deviangam and Goswami Gund.

### Muslim

The shrines of the eminent Réshî saints Bab Zain-ud-Din Wali (at Aish Muqâm) and Bâbâ Hyder Réshî (in Ânañtnâg town) are the most famous Islâmic shrines of Ânañtnâg. Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali, the Alamdar of Kashmîr, had himself foretold where the resting-places of these two major saints, among the last of the great Réshîs, would be.

Other important shrines in the district are those of Bâbâ Dawood Ghani (at Vailoo), Hazrat Noor Shah Baghdadi (at Kund), Hazrat Sheikh Syed Samnani (at Kulgam) and Bâbâ Naseer-ud-Din Ghazi (at Bijbehara). The shrines at Kaba Marg and Kheeram Sirhâmâ possess holy relics of Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him.

And then there is the difficult-to-slot shrine of Harut and Marut.

**Aish Muqâm** (6,070', 76 km. from Srinagar; 20 km. from Pahalgâm.)  
*The shrine:* This powerful shrine is perched atop a hillock a hundred metres above the main road that leads from Ânañtnâg to Pahalgâm. Therefore, it is clearly visible in all its majesty from the main road. A side road branches off to the right from the Pahalgâm road and climbs gently uphill to the shrine. After you drive for a few hundred metres you will reach the bottom of a row of steps that leads to the shrine.

The shrine is located inside a deep (and often very narrow) cave. Several relics associated with the Bab are kept in a room just outside the cave. They will be brought out and shown to you through a window for a small fee. Do you remember the rod—the staff—that Moses parted the waters with? It is supposed to be one of the relics on display.

*The saint:* Sheikh Zain-ud-Din Wali belonged to the (Hindu) royal family of Kishtwâr (Doda). His name was Zia Singh and he lived in the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. He came to Kashmîr for spiritual guidance and became a disciple of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali (Nund Rishi). (See 'Budgâm.)

According to another version, Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali had gone to Kishtwâr to proselytise. Zia Singh suffered from a disease that the doctors were not able to treat. The Sheikh cured him miraculously. Zia became the Sheikh's disciple and accepted Islâm. Though his formal name was Zain-ud-Din, his followers knew him as the Bab.

In those days Aish Muqâm was said to be a place where the devil lived. In any case, it was full of snakes, which would terrorise the local people.

When the Bab went to Aish Muqâm the snakes all ran away and the demon, too, vanished. Instead, a fresh-water spring emerged from the



ground. A wave of joy ran through the countryside, and people began to settle at Aish Muq  m. The village became a place of pilgrimage. To this day the *Urs* of the Bab is celebrated as the victory of good over evil.

### The 'Zool' Festival:

This is a one-week festival held at Aish Muq  m (near Pahalg  m), on the annual *urs* of Sheikh (Bab) Zain-ud-Din Wali. It takes place in April, to celebrate the end of the winter and the beginning of the sowing season. This is the most picturesque local festival of Kashmir, and also one of the most popular. It takes place in the evening when it is quite cold and the days are still short. Because it normally rains on this auspicious occasion it is likely to be colder and darker still. Since 2001, I have been getting the Tourism Department to sponsor part of this unique festival.

The several relics housed in the shrine are displayed before the public. This signals the beginning of the festival.

*Torchlight Procession:* The highlight of the festival is a torchlight procession in the evening. By six in the evening children start lighting *lesh  * torches. These are made of a local wood. Strips of *lesh  *, each about six to eight inches long and an inch wide, are tied around the top end of a straight wooden staff. It is slightly longer than an Olympic torch, and much thicker than a walking stick. Besides, it is tubular, like a thick rod, and not conical. Children's torches are thick, but rarely longer than 15".

As soon as a lit match is applied to these *lesh  * strips, they catch fire. 'Like petrol does,' someone remarked. Once lit, even rain can't douse this flame. Indeed, rain is considered a good omen on the evening of the *zool*. It rains heavily, though only for a few minutes, in most years. This brings the temperature down considerably: and Kashmir can be quite cold in early April.

The other quality that this flame is said to have is that it does not burn clothes. I don't see how, because a flame is a flame. But highly educated people have vouched for this.

As many as 237 steps and some seventy landings (most of them redone in expensive *devri* stone by the Tourism Department during my tenure there) lead from the car park to the shrine. Around dusk people start climbing up these steps, normally single file, in small processions. Each procession consists of a group of friends and/ or relatives. The intervals between processions are irregular. Sometimes, when attendance is at its peak, there are so many processions that they merge into one long row of torches.

*Entranced Youths:* The processions end at the uppermost landing. There you might find a dozen or so youths, all in a mystic trance (*h  l*), jumping up and down, shouting Isl  mic-and shrine-specific slogans. The slogans are wholesome and offend no sect. After a while, these youths run towards the not-very-large courtyard outside the shrine. A few thousand people, all



charged with devotion, some of them also jumping about in a trance, would already be assembled there.

Ten or fifteen minutes later, another group of similarly entranced youths might rush into the courtyard, also jumping up and down, leaping about and running fast at the same time. They all jump a few feet above the ground. By now one of the previous groups, equally frenzied, would have left. After a while, yet another group will come up, running. The chain continues for more than an hour.

This spiritually-charged atmosphere is called *phrow* (rhymes with 'flow'). This is a Kashmiri word used exclusively in connection with Aish Muqam.

*The progression of the evening:* After a while, *bhānds*, the traditional minstrels of Kashmir, walk in, wearing elegant green clothes and green caps.

By 6:30pm. smoke from torches placed at the middle-level begins to rise. There would be around twenty unlit torches in the courtyard. Around 7pm, just before the *namaz* of the *maghrib*, these are straightened and lit.

By 7:30pm. the courtyard empties out. People extinguish their torches and leave. But before they do they create a bonfire. After a while, the *namaz* having been performed, other people start coming in.

*The multitudes:* There are a number of buildings around the shrine. A few thousand more people watch the festivity in the courtyard from the windows and from atop the roofs of these buildings. In all there were more than ten thousand such devotees on the evening of the *zool* of 2001.

Around 60,000 people are said to visit the shrine during the course of the day of the *zool*. The biggest crowds come the next day. The elders sing hymns on the night before the *zool*. In most Islāmic lands this is known as *shab khwāni*. This whole series of prayer and festivity lasts around five or six days.

As in all lands and with all religious groups, children see it more as a festival, with lights everywhere, as in the Hindus' *Diwali*.

*Layout:* The architecture and layout of the Aish Muqām shrine and the surrounding houses are somewhat like that of a *gompa* (monastery)-complex in Ladākh. There are fascinating eavesboards made of logs sliced into two.

*The surrounding valleys:* Gujjar tribals live in the hills and valleys around the shrine. Those who can't make it to the *zool* light torches and place them outside their doors. At night this can be a nice sight, except that the torches are much too thinly scattered. There'll be one torch on one hillock, and the next torch might be half a kilometre away. Wood is getting expensive, and difficult to obtain. Therefore, every year the number of torches is a little less than the year before.



### The Rod/Staff Of Moses/Jesus

Several histories of Kashmir claim that Lord Jesus' Rod or Staff was once stored in Srinagar's Khânqâh-i-Mo'ulla. Some believe that the rod was later taken by disciples of the Shah-e-Hamadân to Hazara (now in Pakistan). Aziz Kashmîrî, an expert on the 'Christ in Kashmir' theory, says that it was taken to Aish Muqâm instead.

The keepers of the shrine told Mr. Kashmîrî that what they had was the Rod of Moses and that it had indeed been brought there from Srinagar's Khânqâh-i-Mo'ulla. They said that Mir Syed Ali Hamadâni had gifted the rod to Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali, who gave it to his disciple, the Bab.

Who knows, perhaps at some stage the rod had passed from Moses to Lord Jesus. In any case Christ is believed to have visited the cave at Aish Muqâm. In fact, some scholars argue that the 'Aish' in the name of the shrine is derived from 'Isa,' the Eastern name for Jesus. ('Isa,' also spelt and pronounced 'Eesa,' sounds eerily like 'Eesh', the Hindu word for God.) Muqâm means 'place'. So the whole name could mean 'the place of Jesus'.

Aziz Kashmîrî quotes the mediæval *Rishi Nama* as saying that 'during the time of Prophet Isa' a demon used to live in the cave. A wrestler called Buma Sen killed the demon. The name Buma Sen indicates that this must have been in the first millenium after Christ.

The rod is almost 8 feet long and is covered with a green cloth. Aziz Kashmîrî writes, 'It is a sacred rod, which should be honoured and touched by the eyes'. Whenever an epidemic or natural disaster strikes the people of the area, they take the Rod to the Idgah. It is said that the calamity then disappears.

*Architecture:* This is an exceptionally picturesque shrine, especially because of the way it sits atop a hillock just above the road to Pahalgâm. As at Srinagar's Khânqâh-i-Mu'allâ, there are features in the woodwork of this shrine that remind you strongly of Ladâkhi gompâs.

Islâmic monuments built or renovated in Kashmir after the 1970s have mostly been made of brick and cement. Till the year 2000, Aish Muqâm was one of the few shrines left the architecture of which was purely Kashmîrî. Some renovations made inside the cave in 2001 have used non-Kashmîrî building materials.

There is some fine latticework (*pinjra-kâri*) at the shrine, as well as colourful panels. Right in front of the entrance of the shrine there is a longish verandah with a roof but no walls. (This is also the pattern at some other shrines, notably Makhdoom Sâheb in Srinagar.) You can see the Lidder river and the surrounding countryside from this open verandah. Families bring along cauldrons full of food. They picnic on this verandah before or after paying homage inside the cave shrine.



There are two other well-known shrines on the road to Pahalgâm, Bam Zoo and Seer Hamadân.

**Bam Zoo** (bam rhymes with 'gum'): In Urdu the name is spelt and pronounced Bom Zoo, the 'Bom' rhyming with 'home'. It is also spelt Bum Zu, Bhum Ju, Bumazuv and Bhaumajo. This, the shrine of Hazrat Bâm-ud-Din, is on the main road itself, also on the right as we drive up from Ânañtnâg to Pahalgâm. You have to climb only a few steps from the main road to enter this very old building.

Hindu sadhus going to Sri Amarnâth ji would often camp here during the Amarnâth yatra. Bakaya writes, '[The Bumazuv] temple, [was] known in ancient times as Bhimkesava, [and was] erected by Bhima Shahi, during the time of Khsemagupta [sic; Kshemagupta is meant] (950-58 A.D.). It is now converted into a Mohammadan [sic] 'Ziarat' and covered inside and outside with a thick coat of mud plaster. It is supposed to be the resting place of Bâbâ Bamudin and is a place of pilgrimage for Muslims. Local tradition records that the saint, before his conversion, was a Hindu ascetic. Close to this temple there is a small cave in a cliff, containing a well preserved stone temple. There is another small cellar closeby which also has been converted into a tomb.'

Bam Zoo, too, is a cellar of sorts, a kind of an artificial cave. Its ceiling is not high enough for tall people at places, and just high enough at others.

Several historians rate Bam Zoo among the four oldest monuments in Kashmîr. The *Gazetteer* notes, 'The cave-temple stands at the far end of a natural but artificially enlarged fissure in the limestone cliff. The entrance to the cavern... is carved into an architectural doorway, and a gloomy passage, 50 feet in length, leads from it to the door of the temple.'

**Seer Hamadân:** This shrine is on the left while going to Pahalgâm. You take the side road on the left and drive for around a kilometre into the village till you come to this very colourful shrine in a large open area deep inside the village.

A relic of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has become a major attraction in Seer since the 1980s. Tourists going to Pahalgam and Amarnath ji often stop by this roadside village to see a footprint of the Prophet imprinted neatly on black stone.

**Harut and Marut:** (pron.: hâ-root, mâ-root) This shrine is in Ranbir Pura village, which is on the Mattan karewa, a few hundred metres before the Martand temple. There is a shaded picnic spot near the point where water gushes out of a well inside the shrine. It is not a Hindu shrine. Its adherents are entirely Muslim. The illiterate accept it uncritically as one of the many Muslim *ziarats* (shrines) of Kashmîr. They pray for all kinds of boons at the shrine.



Yet the concept behind the shrine is unIsl  mic, or at least pre-Isl  mic Babylonian. The pre-Isl  mic, mainly Jewish, belief is that Harut and Marut were angels who fell in love with Jupiter and were therefore hung upside down above a well. Almost all Kashm  ris who pray at the shrine accept this version.

The Isl  mic position is thus: 'Among the Jewish traditions in the Midrash [Jewish commentaries] was a story of two angels who asked Allah's permission to come down to earth but succumbed to temptation, and were hung up by their feet at Babylon for punishment. Such stories about sinning angels who were cast down to punishment were believed by the early Christians also... Being good men, Harut and Marut of course dabbled in nothing evil.... [They] did not withhold knowledge, yet never taught anyone [magic and 'such things'] without plainly warning them of the trial and temptation of knowledge in the hands of evil men.' (Commentary on sura 2, verse 102 of *The Holy Quran*, published by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, i.e. the King of Saudi Arabia.)

Thus, Isl  m accepts that Harut and Marut had existed and were angels. It differs with the Jews on whether the two had sinned and therefore deserved punishment. Isl  m holds that they were sinless.

Several Kashm  ris believe the pre-Isl  mic version. This indicates that the legend of Harut and Marut had reached Kashm  r well before Isl  m did. Some scholars cite this as yet another proof that the people of Kashm  r had migrated from Israel and are one of the lost Jewish tribes.

## Rivers

There are separate entries on the Jehlum, Brang, Sandrin and Lidder rivers in the chapter on 'Rivers'.

## Important places of tourist interest

**Achabal:** (1,677 metres.) 58 km. from S  rinagar, 8 km. from   na  tn  g. Also spelt Achhabal. Much before the Mughals decided to patronise this village, it was the country retreat of Kashm  r's own kings. Its original name was Aksipalanaga, after King Aksha (A.D. 571-631). The common man pronounced it as 'Akshaval'. The Mughals renamed it S  heB  b  d and Begumabad, both after Emperor Shah Jehan's daughter Jehan Ara, who was also known as Begum S  heba. The Mughal names did not stick, though.

**Mughal Garden:** This resort is centred around an ancient spring, the largest in Kashm  r. It owes its renown to a terraced garden constructed by the Moghuls. In A.D. 1620 Empress (Begum) Noor Jeh  n got the upper part of this garden (B  gh) developed, because of which it is known as the



‘Bâgh-e-Begum Abad’. It contains the ruins of a *hammam* (hot water bath) which used to derive its heat from what a government publication calls a ‘logical lamp’, adding that ‘the lamp which was magically kindled was put out during repairs.’ (I assume all this to mean that a process that we can no longer understand or replicate heated the waters of the *hammam*.)

*Layout:* The garden is some fifty metres away from the main road. However, to all but experts the road appears to touch the garden. That is because in the 1960s the government got a green lawn constructed between the garden and the road. It seems to be part of the Mughal Garden.

The main garden begins where the two smart gates are. They are made of expensive *devri* stone, with carved wooden pillars and shingled roofs. Beyond the gates is the garden. The government in the 1960s got the paths paved with cement and put an incongruous low railing along the paths. In 2001, my Department (Floriculture) started replacing, in phases, the cement with blocks of *devri* stone.

*The springs:* The spring, more accurately the series of springs, issues from several places at the foot of the rocky spur of the Achabal Thang mountain. The main spring, shaded by some grand *chinâr* trees, passes through the garden built by Emperor Jehangir and Noor Jehân. The spring pours like a waterfall out of the Sosanwor hill. A mountain covered with a deodar forest towers just above its head. The waters fall over a cascade into a square reservoir, at the centre of which is a summer-house. At the lower end is the *bârâdarî*. It is believed that the spring is really a reappearance of River Brang, which had vanished a few kilometres before into a wide crack in its limestone bed. The waters are very cold and not particularly good for drinking.

These waters flow through the garden in channels lined with stones and three aqueducts. There are three waterfalls and two large reservoirs with fish. There is a pavilion in the middle of the upper reservoir. A trout hatchery was founded during the Dogrâ era, nearby.

The people of the village consider the spring sacred. (This is common among rural Kashmîrî Muslims.) They always felt that visitors to the garden were desecrating the spring by throwing litter into it. So, in the 1980s, they got the government to construct a locked *bârâdarî* (pavilion) on the highest surface to enclose the spring. This red brick structure looks totally out of place with the elegant pavilions of the lower levels. The ruins of a Mughal structure can be seen behind it.

*Shrines:* The Mughal prince Dara Shikoh probably constructed the mosque in the garden. The *ziarat* (shrine) of Syed Shahab-ud-Din of Baghdad, who died in the late sixteenth century, is also located in the village.



*Getting there:* It is also possible to reach Achabal from Mattan and Martand, on a picturesque, motorable country road. Martand is 6 km. from here.

*Accommodation:* There is a fine Dogrâ-era Tourist Bungalow, as well as some public-sector run self-catering 'huts'. Both are next to the Mughal Garden. However, before leaving for Achabal, do check the availability of rooms from the Jammû & Kashmîr TDC office at the Tourist Reception Centre, Srinagar. There is also a camping ground in Achabal.

*Other attractions:* There is a large, late 20<sup>th</sup> century, 'Cafeteria Park' at a short distance from the Mughal Garden, also on the main road. A nursery for chinâr trees is the other major attraction.

**Ânañtnâg town** was built on the arid Martand plateau, a little more than a kilometre away from the banks of the Jehlum, close to the junction of the Arpat, Brang and Sandrin streams, and somewhat before the point where the Lîdder joins them. The Arpat is normally fordable. Till motorable roads became common in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the journey from Ânañtnâg town to Srinagar would be by boat, on the Jehlum. The 35-mile trip would take eighteen hours and would begin at Khanabal.

Rising 350 feet above the town, or 5,896' above the mean sea level, is a hill made of mountain limestone and some shingly conglomerate. The holy stream of Anant Nag, from which the town and district get their names, flows from the foot of this hill. The stream is surrounded by chinârs. The waters of the stream are received in stone-lined tanks. Next to it has traditionally been a double-storeyed brick building for travellers.

At a short distance is the Sonur Pookur spring, the waters of which are considered healthy and good to taste.

Other streams that flow near the town include the Soolik Nag, which has a heavy sulphur content and is good for skin diseases. The waters of the Mulik Nag spring, on the other hand, are pure and fresh.

The Sarkari Bâgh area, which has a number of government offices, is where the Dogrâ Mahârâjâs used to stay when in town.

*Bâbâ Hardi Rishi: Shrine and Urs:* One of the several mosques of Ânañtnâg was built in honour of Rishi Malu. It is believed that Emperor Akbar's first defeat at the hands of the Kashmîri army, when his forces tried to annex Kashmîr, was because of the Rishi's prayers.

The Jâmâ Masjid is located near the tomb of Rishi Malu, also known as Bâbâ Haidar and Hardi Rishi.

The annual *urs* of Bâbâ Hardi Rishi (aka *Rishi-moul*) are celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> Poh (roughly 15<sup>th</sup> December). Like most Rishis, the Bâbâ was a bachelor and a strict vegetarian who did not eat onions or garlic either. Out of respect for the Bâbâ almost all the people of Anantanag, and many other



Kashmîris, stop eating meat for a whole week at the time of his annual *urs*. Even during the rest of the year it is taboo to visit his shrine after eating any kind of meat or having consumed an intoxicant. It is believed that tragedies befall those who violate this taboo.

Bâbâ Hardi Rishi was a disciple of Makhdoom Sâheb, the leading Kashmîri sufi of his day (see 'Srinagar City'). Ironically, Makhdoom Sâheb's disciples had invited Akbar to annex Kashmîr. The Bâbâ died in 986 Hijri at the age of 77, as indicated by the chronograms. 'Abid' and 'Sheikh din Bud.'

*Vazîr Bâgh* (or Boni Bagh): This vast garden is the best kept secret on the tourist map of Kashmîr. On paper it measures 25 acres, but in fact is probably bigger. It is right in the middle of what seems to be a nondescript town. As the State's Commissioner for Floriculture, Parks and Gardens it has always been my regret that India's 20<sup>th</sup> century gardens are plain boring. They neither have the meticulous layout of Mughal Gardens nor the wooded mystique of European/ British Raj botanical gardens.

This 19<sup>th</sup> century Dogrâ era orchard comes closest to the European ideal. The first portion that you will see is a flat park, of the kind I find dull. The woods start after that. Weeping willows dominate. The Bagh has been built on a bank of the Jehlum. Happily, the village on the other bank is equally wooded. It is called Bânġ Dâr, or "the village where opium grows". There's plenty of opium in the Vazir Bagh, too.

During the Dogrâ era this was used by European and Westernised Indian travellers as a camping ground. Boats would be moored on the bank.

*Eidgah*: This is a small green patch of land on the road to Verinag. Its layout, especially the trees in the background, make it one of the prettiest Eid-grounds in the state.

*Handicrafts*: Traditionally, till the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, shawl-weaving was the main industry in the town and employed almost half of its working population. Ānañtnâg town was also famous for the fine saddles and rugs made there. It still is the capital of the 'gabba' industry (see 'Gabbas' in the chapter on 'Handicrafts').

Till even the mid-1990s, there was some incredible woodwork to be seen in the architecture and interior design of the houses of this town. Masood Hussain, the artist, showed me dozens of colour slides of intricate latticework and carvings in relief, both in wood. We were to have worked together on a book on this vanishing craft. The slides still survive but many of the houses got burnt during that unfortunate phase of history.

*Aru*: c.9,500' (A short drive (or three-four hour trek) from Pahalgâm). Aru is the last inhabited village on the trekking route. It has a fine meadow, much of which has been built upon in the cause of tourism, trekking and mountaineering.



**Bijbehâra:** (8 km. from Ânañtnâg and 49 km. from Srinagar, on the National Highway). This ancient town, built on both banks of the Jehlum, is renowned 'for the delicacy of its trellis-work, and for the manufacture of blankets' (The *Gazetteer*, 1890.) 'Modern' architecture and the fires that periodically afflict the wooden buildings of Kashmir have taken their toll. Yet, a lot of trellis-work still survives.

In ancient times the town was probably the capital of all Kashmir—certainly of a part of it. It was then called *Vijaya Para* or the City of Victory. Over the centuries the name changed to its present form. The other theory is that around 67 B.C. a king called Vijaya Bijiri ruled Kashmir from this town, giving it his name. Khalid Bashir's theory is that King Vijaya ruled between 114 and 106 B.C. and that he named the town Vijeshwar 'after the famous ancient temple of the same name which was later razed by Raja Kalash in A.D. 1080 when his father, Anant Dev, escaping his son's revolt, took refuge in the temple. The fire destroyed the town' as well.

There is a traditional path, as well as motorable road, from here to Shopian.

Apart from its physical charms, this small town is home to several temples, around a dozen mosques and almost as many *ziarats* (Muslim shrines). The most famous *ziarat* is that of Bâbâ Nasib-ud-Din Ghazi, built on a bank of the Jehlum, near the Jâmâ Masjid. Both are in the heart of the town. (Lal Ded is believed to have died just outside the courtyard of the Jâmâ Masjid, where there is a grave that is said to be hers.)

Hari Chandra Razan, an ancient king of Kashmir, is said to have built a temple here. By the time Mahârâjâ Gulab Singh visited Kashmir the temple was in ruins. The Mahârâjâ vowed to build a new temple atop the ruins. So he picked up a stone and placed it there to mark the spot. However, the Mahârâjâ died before the temple could be completed, which was done in 1871 by the Mahârâjâ's son. The temple was built of white stone with a gilded spire.

**The Fairs and Festivals:** The shrine and urs of *Bâbâ Nasib-ud-Din Ghazi*: Dhambâli: There is a famous festival at this important shrine in June. The festival is held when the paddy crop is transplanted and is often called the dhamâl (or dhambâli) festival. The word is drawn from an archaic Persian word for 'mystic trance' or 'to run after.' *Bhânds* (folk singers and actors) go from house to house enacting satires and beating drums. According to the local calendar, the festival is celebrated on the 13th of Har. (roughly, June). It is Bijbehâra's most important festival. In 2001, I got the Tourism Department to adopt and promote the festival.

The singers and actors (ma'it) do not perform for money alone. Their goals are spiritual. They chant a duâ (blessing/ prayer), 'O God, please



protect the people of this village/ house. Keep them free of disease.' The others present reply by chanting, 'Âmeen' ('may it be so'). The performers then rub their hands on a large drum. After that they rub their hands on the faces of children. It is said that God normally accepts their prayers.

Officially, dhambâlî is a two-day 'festival.' In practice, till the 1960s and '70s it would last for fifteen days. Modern people are pressed for time and can't afford long festivals. Some of them don't even believe in mysticism. Mr. Justice Mir says that those who find bliss during dhambâlî tell the unbelievers, 'The dhambâlî recharges my batteries for (these) fifteen days. What's your problem?'

*The saint:* Bâbâ Nasib-ud-Din was a follower of the Shah-i-Hamadân. He was what, in Islâmic lore, is called a *mast qalandar*: a saint oblivious to the world around him, lost in a mystic trance, and in communion with God.

The Bâbâ was known for his self-denial. He was a strict vegetarian and did not ever eat any animal flesh. He got 1200 mosques constructed in different parts of Kashmîr, in addition to bathrooms and sarais. He also wrote fourteen books on religion. The Bâbâ spent all his life serving the poor. Therefore, the people called him *Abul Fuqrâ* ('the father of the needy').

He would gather a group of disciples and go to a village. There he would preach the message of Islâm. His style was simple and it appealed to the heart. The people would go into a state of mystic frenzy (hâl). The Ghazi would then persuade them to construct a mosque. The charged crowd would, in that state, start building a mosque. By the evening the basic structure would be ready. Fundamentalists consider such methods unIslâmic.

The Bâbâ died on the 13th Muharram 1047 Hijri (A.D. 1637).

*The tomb and pond of Lal Ded:* There is a small grave in the south-eastern corner of the Jâmâ Masjid of Bijbehârâ. It is supposed to be the tomb of Lal Ded. The Lal Trâg pond (see 'Pulwâmâ') is located close to the Jâmâ Masjid of Bijbehara and near the National Highway. To this day both Hindus and Muslims visit the pond. They pay homage by pouring the first milk of their cows into the pond. This ceremony and the miracle of the water which retained the shape of the pitcher are a recurrent theme in the miniature paintings of Kashmîr. In the past newly married Kashmîri Pandit couples would often go to the Lal Trâg on the day after the wedding to obtain Lal Ded's blessings.

The Waheed Bâbâ Wudar is to the west of Bijbehara. On this wudar grows a tree sacred to the followers of Lord Shiva, which includes all Kashmîri Hindus, who offer prayers here. (A wudar is a table-land.)

*Mughal Garden:* The Mughal prince Dara Shikoh got a Badshahi Bâgh (Imperial Garden) constructed on a bank of the Jehlum in 1060 Hijri (A.D. 1650). For that reason it is popularly known as the 'Dara Shikoh-a' garden



or bāgh. This is not the nondescript modern park that you see from the national highway. It is on a side-road, immediately behind the park.

This chinār garden has been laid out in the classic chār bāgh (four gardens) style. This means that the garden is one big square divided into four squares. Four channels radiate from the centre, in the four directions. There are fountains within these channels. The original stone fountains are all gone. They were replaced with cement fountains in the late twentieth century. A substantial portion of the northeastern square has been converted into a playground for the neighbouring school. An ugly tin shed houses an electric transformer, next to a pink guardroom. Both are near the heart of the garden, rather than at its periphery.

The garden includes two masonry reservoirs and avenues of chinār trees. Khalid Bashir says that one of these chinārs 'attained the circumference of 56 feet.' He implies that this was the widest chinār tree in Kashmir in the 20th century.

Among the late-twentieth century additions are some strange cement structures, about 1½ feet high and as big as a large carrom-board. Perhaps they were meant to be planters. Low railings, also incongruous, were added during the same era.

At the centre of the four squares is an elegant stone tank with a platform surrounded by water in the middle. The *bârâdarî* (pavilion) on this platform was probably built in the late 20th century. Of all the additions made during that era, the pavilion alone blends with the garden. The tank, for instance, has been deepened considerably. The lower level is not only inelegant, being made of cement rather than stone, it is bad hydraulics. That's because it is much deeper than the channels it feeds and is fed by.

The Mughals used to get water for this garden from River Lidder, though it is a few miles away and though River Jehlum is next door. That's because the Jehlum is almost 70 feet below the garden while the Lidder is at a higher level. The Lidder water would be brought from a nearby village called Nangil. In the second half of the 20th century farmers began to divert water from the Mughals' canal to their own fields. By the 1990s there was not a drop of water in the four channels of the garden, or in the fountains. That is why even in Kashmir hardly anyone has heard of this garden.

In 2001, my department (Floriculture) installed two small electric motors to pump out subsoil water for the greens. We are trying to similarly lift water from the Jehlum for the channels and have met with some success.

The main buildings of this garden are entirely gone, though a brick *bârâdarî* was built in the late 19th century. This *bârâdarî*, which is at the western end (closest to the Jehlum), probably straddled the western channel. Its central portion is gone and only some pillars remain. Today snakes (reportedly, non-poisonous) live near those ruins.



**Daksum:** (2,438 m.; 85 km. from Srinagar.) This is a forest retreat located on the Ānañtnâg-Simthan-Kishtwâr road. Mountains surround it. A stream, which has trout fish, flows through Daksum. From here one can cross over to Kishtwâr through the Simthan pass. The Tourist Bungalow and cafeteria at Daksum will resume when tourism does.

**Doru:** A very fine road (the National Highway bypass to Verinag and Ānañtnâg) leads to this tehsil (sub-district) headquarters which has one of the five main shrines of Shah-e-Hamadân in Kashmîr. The present structure was built in the 1990s and, thus, is large but undistinguished. The inside, however, is a different matter. The fine carvings on walnut wood and the chandelier indicate that with time this shrine will rival the best in terms of physical beauty. There is a small park, with three large chinâr trees and a rest house for government officials, across the road. The town has been built on the bank of the Sandrin river.

Renamed Shahabad by Noor Jehân, this was a very important imperial town, where the king used to live. Little is left of the Mughal palace. Nettles and wild hemp grow nearby. The soil here must be extraordinary, because the apples of this place are considered the best in southern Kashmîr and its rice the finest in the entire Valley. Veins of iron and copper exist in this area and during the Afghân era (late 18th and early 19th centuries) both were extracted from here.

Because of its closeness to the Banihal pass, Shahabad/Doru has traditionally been of enormous importance from the defence point of view. Emperor Akbar's most important malik (feudal noble) used to live here. All the surrounding areas came under him because it was his duty to protect the Banihal route to Hindustan (central India). Like the kings of Kishtwâr, his family claimed to be the descendants of the great Nausherwan-e-Aadil of Persia.

**Harnag:** This is a high-altitude lake, a four-hour trek from Baltal (Srinagar district). It remains frozen till almost June. When covered with snow it is easy to mistake the lake for land and walk on it by mistake. Shepherds hold it in reverence. Every spring they sacrifice a sheep near the banks of the lake. They believe this brings them good weather in summer, when their flocks go up to graze. (See 'Trekking in Kashmîr'.)

**Ka'abamarg:** A medium-sized shrine here plays host to the moo-é-pâk (the holy hair). This is one of three hair from the beard of Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, enshrined in Kashmîr. The other two are in Srinagar and Shopian. The present shrine was built in 2001 in the unfortunate Gothic tradition mistaken in post 1970 Kashmîr as Islâmic.

(Travel 8 km. from Ānañtnâg (Islâmad) town on the Verinag road till you come to Larkipora. Turn right there. The shrine is a kilometre ahead, close to the main road.)



**Khemsar:** This is a small glacial lake on the trekking routes to Târsar and Lidderwatt. It is a four-hour trek from Kulan (a roadhead near Sonamarg in Srinagar district).

**Kokernag:** (2012m.) Kokernag is 20 km. from Ânañtnâg town, 12 km. from Verinag, 16 km. from Achabal and 75 km. from Srinagar. A botanical garden, with several kinds of roses, has been woven around a fresh water stream here.

The thickly wooded sheer mountain that rises sharply from the spring is the main attraction of Kokernag. Picturesque paths and shaded walks have been created in the forest. On an uncrowded summer's day it is my favourite walk in all Kashmîr. During the Dogrâ era there was a forest rest house here. In 1979, a botanical garden, a garden of the best roses and a garden of various Kashmîrî wild, medicinal and aromatic plants was added.

In Kashmîr rhododendrons have managed to grow in Kokernag alone.

*The springs:* 'Koker' means 'cock' (as in male-hen). Its claws have five fingers. Nag means spring or stream. The five main springs of Kokernag are spread like the claws of a cock (rooster in American English).

The milky waters of the Kokernag are said to have curative properties. In all there must be six or seven springs here. They gush out of a limestone rock at the feet of a green, wooded mountain. Together they form a large stream, which has some of the finest waters in all Kashmîr. The Afghân governors would insist that water for their drinking be brought from here. Earlier, Abul Fazl, the 16th century historian of the Mughals, had described these waters as 'limpid, cold and wholesome...Should a hungry person drink of it, his hunger will be appeased and the satisfaction it gives will renew desire for it.' Arora describes the waters as 'decidedly the lightest in [all of] Kashmîr but [not] the best.'

The stream goes on to merge with the Bring River. The valley in which these springs are located is also called Bring. There is some trout, brown as well as rainbow, in the nâg. Anglers prefer to go to Sagam village, some 5 km. downstream.

*Accommodation:* There is a Tourist Bungalow, self-catering huts and a cafeteria at Kokernag. The Forest, Fisheries and Floriculture departments have Rest House there. However, check their availability before setting out for Kokernag.

**Kolâhoi:** (c.11,000') This valley is at the extreme northern edge of the Lidder. Its name is derived from a large rock in a natural hollow inside which a faquir used to live. Because of this the stone enjoys an exalted-almost sacred-status among some people.

*Glacier and group of peaks:* There is also a celebrated glacier (5,425m./17,800') and group of peaks of the same name. The glacier is called 'the



Matterhorn of Kashmîr.' Its melting waters form River Lidder. The peaks are easily accessible. Névé and Mason (1912) were the first to climb them. Since then there have been numerous expeditions every year. There are several routes to the peaks.

**Kulgām:** This picturesque town is on the southern side of a table-land. It overlooks the Veshau river, which branches out into a number of channels. The town was once known for the wooden toys made there. Kulgām used to be a major mediæval trade junction. Merchants from the Punjab would come here through the Gulabgarh (Jammû) pass. There are two major ziarats, the bigger and older one being that of Syed Hussain Samnani and the smaller one dedicated to Shah-e-Hamadân.

Syed Hussain was one of the first three Syeds who migrated from Iraq to Kashmîr because of the persecution of the Syeds by Amir Timur, 'the Lame.' He was an eminent scholar and saint. The Syed died on the 11th day of Shaban in 792 Hijri (A.D. 1389). His urs is held on the 13th day of Katik near his shrine. A major fair is organised on the occasion. Thousands of people come from the neighbouring areas.

Durgi Shuri is a festival of the Kashmîri Pandits of Kulgām town and tehsil. It is held on the 8th day of the lunar month that falls in July.

**Kutihar valley:** This is a fertile, green valley to the northeast of Achabal. On the mountain above Kutihar is a pass that leads to Upper Warhwan.

**Lidderwatt:** This is a large meadow, a six-hour trek from Pahalgâm. Black bears can be sighted in the spring (April, early May). Brown bears have been seen in the valley between Lidderwatt and Satlanjan in all of June as well as in autumn.

**Luk Bhavani:** Travel 8 km. from Ānañtnâg/ Islāmabad town on the Verinag road till you come to Larkipora. Take a side road from there. The shrine is around a kilometre ahead.

**Mârsar:** This is a high-altitude lake. Though the subject of romantic poetry, it is dreaded by the local people. They do not visit it because they believe a dangerous serpent lives there. The waters of the lake flow down to the Dachigam Sanctuary and, thence, to the Dal Lake. You can reach the lake either by climbing up from Dachigam (Srinagar district) or, with some difficulty, from Târsar (see below, and in the section on 'Trekking in Kashmîr'). You can see the Mârsar from the ridge that lies beyond the Târsar.

**Nowbug, village and valley:** The village is around 17 km. from Kokernag. Lohrein is roughly 1.5 km. before Nowbug village. Trekkers have traditionally camped at the fine ground there.

The eponymous valley is about 3 km. wide. It is picturesque and, at an altitude considerably higher than Srinagar. Therefore, it is colder, too. Arora describes its scenery as 'park-like... backed by rugged peaks.'



*Traditional trekking route:* There is a traditional path from Nowbug to Kutihaar. It goes over the hills and passes through the Halkun Galli (pass) till it reaches the valley of River Arpat.

**Pahalgâm:** (See the chapter on 'Pahalgâm'.)

**Panzath** (lit. the five hundred springs): If you travel a little more than a kilometre north of Qazigund on the National Highway (i.e. in the direction of Srinagar), a rough road on the right will take you to Panzath, which is a kilometre and a half away. (Another kilometre ahead on the National Highway, another road branches off to right. This slightly better road, too, takes about 1.5 km. to reach Panzath.)

As promised by its name, this cluster of villages has five hundred little springs, which merge into six canals, which in turn unite to form a medium sized, clear-water stream. (I didn't count all five hundred springs, but I can vouch for the six water channels.) Since mediæval times one of these canals has been carrying the waters of Panzath, through the Bihama wudar to the Sandrin river, which it joins.

The main spring here is said to be very deep. According to a local legend a boatman who was an expert swimmer dived into this spring, never to be seen again. The rocks and weeds at the bottom obviously prevented him from rising to the surface ever again.

Apparently these springs have been mentioned in the *Rājātaraṅgiṇī* as a picnic spot favoured by the kings. The stream is home to the rainbow trout and some species of duck-including a blue-necked one. In nearby Nagbal village is the shrine of Syed Aftab Sâheb. Across the stream is a large green meadow on a plateau.

**Rang Marg:** (also Rangamarg) This is a small, green, flat land on the banks of the Marwah-Warhwan river. The camping ground here is called Kaintal. The path between Marwah-Warhwan and Suru passes through it.

**Sekiwas:** This is a meadow on the trekking route between Lidderwatt and the Târsar. Wild flowers that grow in the Sekiwas area in summer (after the middle of June) include buttercups, primulas, gentians, irises and marsh marigolds. The tall, rugged rocks nearby sometimes play host to the Himâlayan blue poppy.

**Târsar:** This glacial lake is named after the goddess Tara. Situated amidst the tall mountains that lie between the Sind and Kashmir valleys, it is the subject of some of Kashmir's finest poetry. (The poet-king Yusuf Shah Chak wrote that on being separated from the plaits of his beloved, his eyes became like the Târsar and Mârsar lakes.) It can be reached either from the northern end of Trâl, or from the Lidderwatt. The lake is a kilometre wide and two km. long. Writer Gary Weare calls it 'one of the most impressive (lakes) in Kashmir'. It is 35 km. from Pahalgâm, on foot.



**Umuoh:** This village is roughly three kilometres from Verinag, uphill on a rough but motorable country road. It used to be the first point of entry from Jammū into the Valley of Kashmir before the National Highway, the Banihal tunnel and automobiles came into existence. Hence the dilapidated, but still large, Mughal-style serai (dormitory; rest house) in the village.

I was taken to the village because of the enormous hype surrounding its Shiva temple. Architecturally the temple is nondescript, and very small. Apparently the Shivling inside is truly powerful. Countless legends, all dating to the 1990s after most Kashmīri Pandits had migrated from Kashmīr, surround this normal sized (about three feet high) phallic symbol. All of them speak of the ling having been shifted from the temple during militancy and having been brought back after a senior police officer had a visitation in a dream.

The local Muslims, the army and the para-military forces are variously said to have shifted the ling to protect it from fundamentalist militants who might have destroyed it. The stone ling was shiny-black when I saw it. According to legend it changes colours in the evenings.

**Verinag:** (80 km. from Srinagar, 26 km. from *Ānañtnâg*.) Verinag is barely 5 km. from the summit of the Banihal pass, which is a two-hour climb from Verinag's Mughal gardens.

It is a stunning location; an almost vertical, densely wooded, mountain with a flat green at its feet. This meadow was converted into a garden by the Mughal emperor Jehangir in AH 1029. (The octagonal tank of the spring was constructed in A.D. 1612, the garden in 1619 and the basin some time between 1619 and 1632.)

Over the centuries the *bârâdarî* (pavilion) of the Verinag garden disintegrated and fell into the pond behind it. However, even in the 1880s it was what the *Gazetteer* called 'a large barn-like building, having numerous chambers, overlook[ing] the north end of the pool, [while] on the west side there is an open pavilion or summer-house... The water is very cold, of a deep bluish-green tint, and swarms with sacred fish, it leaves the basin by a stone-lined channel, which passes through an archway under the *bârâdarî*.' These deep blue waters flow into the Sandrin and were not considered good for drinking even in the 19th century.

The apartments of Empress Noor Jehân are said to have existed by the edge of the water-course. The foundations and the bases of arches in that area are said to be the ruins of those apartments.

The tank is 10-feet deep on the sides and is said to be 54 feet deep at the centre.

The Verinag spring is located at the bottom of the aforesaid mountain. It is 8" deep and only a few feet in length and breadth. It is a perennial spring and is considered the source of the River Jehlum/Vitasta/Behet.



It is believed that Kashmîr used to be one big lake. The gods drained off its waters and converted it into a valley. Then Lord Shiva requested his wife, the goddess Parvati, to manifest herself on earth as a river. Shivji split the earth open with his trident. The crack thus caused measured one *vitast* (span). As a result, the river that came out of this crack came to be variously called the *Vitast(a)*, the *Neel Kund* (blue lake) and the *Sulaghta* (the thrust of the spear). In later times people knew it in Kashmîr as the Behet and elsewhere as the Jehlum.

Some Kashmîrî Pandits believe that the real source of the Jehlum is a spring that is around a kilometre and a half away.

Walnut trees, chinârs and poplars grow in the vicinity. Jehangir wrote in his memoirs, 'The source of the river Bhat [i.e. Behet] lies in a fountain in Kashmîr named *Tir Nâg*, which, in the language of Hindustan, signifies a snake—probably some large snake had been seen there... The form of the fountain is octagonal, and its sides are about 20 yards in length.'

The meaning of the Persian inscriptions on the surrounding wall probably is as follows. According to Vigne, the one on the entrance means, 'This fountain has come from the springs of paradise,' while the one inside means, 'This place of unequalled beauty was raised to the skies by Jehangir Shah Akbar Shah; consider well.'

The village has two *ziarats* (shrines), both dedicated to Fakir Qalandar Ghafur Shah. The land in the vicinity yields fuller's earth (*sang-e-dâlum*).

A stream called the Hakkar Nadi descends from the Banihal pass and flows through the village, before joining the waters of the Verinag spring.

What does Verinag mean? Nag obviously means 'spring'. 'Wer' (*vay-r*) is the name of the region in which this group of springs is located. The region was later renamed Shahabad (for the then prince Shah Jehan) after a palace of that name was built at the behest of Noor Jehân. The Verinag is also known as Neel Nag. (See also the Nil Nâg of 'Budgâm' for some overlapping myths.)

The Tourist Bungalow and cafeteria at Verinag will resume after tourists do.



## 5

### Pahalgâm

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(Pron. *peh-ell-gam*.) This holiday resort is 96 km. from Srinagar and 45 km. from Anāñnâg town (Islāmabad). It is located on the banks of the Lidder (Kolâhoi) River, at the river's junction with the Shesh Nag. The resort is at elevations between 7,200' and 8,500' (2,130m. and above).

Pahalgâm, literally 'the shepherds' village', is the most popular tourist resort in Kashmir after Srinagar, partly because of the variety it affords: mountains, pine and fir forests, a spectacular river and a lively marketplace. It has never had much of a population, hence not much of a history either, except that it started out as a shepherds' village. The town has a large number of hotels in the private and public sectors, as well as self-catering 'huts'.

According to a theory floated in the 1960s, Pahalgâm actually means 'the shepherd's village'. Now we are talking not of a village of several shepherds but that of just one shepherd, the good shepherd, Lord Jesus.

Pahalgâm gets a very different type of tourist than Gulmarg. British officers of the Raj preferred Gulmarg because of its quiet, unhurried seclusion and the privacy that it affords. Indians who are similarly inclined-Anglicised, upper income, cerebral, nature loving-have inherited the mantle from the British. Pahalgâm, on the other hand, has a bustling marketplace. It appeals to those who go to resorts to see and be seen, who like their resorts lively and teeming with vacationers, for whom the gurgling white waters of River Lidder by themselves aren't enough; there should also be picnickers frolicking in them.

Pahalgâm is the main base camp for the Amarnâth Yatra. It is also the starting point for some exciting treks. Most popular is the one to Aru (9,500') and from there to Lidderwatt (9,500'), which is a large and wooded valley. From Lidderwatt one can trek to the Kolâhoi valley (11,000') or the Sind valley. Other treks from Lidderwatt lead to Satlanjan and the Dod Sar lake.



One can also go from Pahalg  m to the Marwah-Warwan valley of Doda. It is a two-day trek. The first halt is normally at Sonaur, with Suknis in the Marwah-Warwan valley coming the next day. (For details, see the chapter on 'Trekking in Kashmir'.)

## How to get there

Pahalg  m can be reached only by road (or helicopter). You can take a bus or taxi from Srinagar or Khanabal/   na  tn  g. (*Important:* Please also see Appendix for details of the Srinagar-Khanabal, Qazigund-Khanabal and Khanabal-Pahalg  m routes, especially what to see en route.) The Khanabal junction is just two kilometres before   na  tn  g town (Isl  mabad), and is almost a part of the town. Therefore, Khanabal is sometimes loosely called   na  tn  g.

If you are driving up from Jamm  , you might like to consider spending a night or two at Pahalg  m even before you reach Srinagar. Just turn right when you reach the tri-junction at Khanabal.

Actually, there are two roads that branch off from the National Highway towards Pahalg  m. The one from Khanabal town is the better one and has several important places on or near the main road. The road from Bijbehera (further ahead on the National Highway) is slightly rougher and best used only when the other road has been damaged (which it sometimes is during the rains). The Bijbehera-Pahalg  m road, being the path less trodden, is more unspoilt and picturesque.

## Where to stay

(i) **Hotels:** There are almost twenty hotels, ranging from the expensive to the mid-market. Because Pahalg  m is a mass destination for Indian tourists, some of the hotels (and restaurants) cater to the lower end of the middle-class market. (ii) The (public sector) Tourist Bungalow: It has a huge garden attached to it (and a roaring river, too). It is much cheaper than private hotels in that category. (iii) There are two (government run) dormitories. Check availability with the Tourist Office at the drop-gate (the point where you enter Pahalg  m.) (iv) Self catering 'Huts': There are one- and two-bedroom holiday huts, with attached kitchens, run by the public sector Jamm   & Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC). Very good value for money. (v) Camping site: Rajavas, a wooded plateau with a view of the valley, is the best place to pitch your tents at.

By and large the trade charges the full printed rate only in May, June, August, September and October. There normally is a 25% off-season discount during the other months. In July, when schools in Kashmir close for vacations,



sometimes the JKTDC gives a 50% discount to visitors from within the state. If there aren't enough bookings, the hotels simply shut down in winter.

## Climate

Pahalgâm is a few degrees colder than Srinagar at any given time of the year.

## Treks out of Pahalgâm

As you will notice in the section on 'Trekking', Pahalgâm is the base camp for more treks than any other place in Kashmir. Some obvious ones recommended for amateurs are:

- i) **The Amarnâth Yatra:** 3 to 5 days, depending on whether you return to Pahalgâm or go on to Sonamarg. (There is a complete chapter on the Amarnâth yatra elsewhere in this book.)
- ii) **Bai Saran** (also spelt Bhai Saran): Less than two hours from the Pahalgâm bazar, it is around 152 metres higher than Pahalgâm proper. Bai Saran is a small, grassy glen amidst forests of fir and pine. You can get a fine view of the valley from there. Most tourists hire ponies to go to Bai Saran.
- iii) **The Tulian lake:** You can reach the Tuli(a)n in a few hours, via Bai Saran. You can possibly return to Pahalgâm the same day. It is at around 12,000' and thus considerably higher than Pahalgâm. Most tourists hire ponies for the 3-4 hour climb up to the snowfield just below and before the lake. After that the snowfield is too narrow for the ponies. In any case, the lake is only a few hundred metres away from the end of the pony track.

There are very tall mountains, normally covered with snow, on three sides of the lake. They rise suddenly from the banks of the lake and go another thousand feet (300 metres) up. The lake itself has ice cold waters and, often, chunks of ice floating in it.

- iv) **Kolâhoi Glacier:** 5 days return; see 'Trekking'.
- v) **Mamleshwar:** Walk 1½ km. down the river from the Pahalgâm bridge. You will come to the ancient Shiv Mamleshwar temple. We know that King Jayasimha (1128-49) had gifted an ornament made of gold to the temple. Therefore, the temple is at least that old, probably older. It is made of stone and is not very big. It has a porch supported by pillars and, in front, a reservoir lined with stones.



- vi) **Aru:** (c.9,500'/ 2,408m. to 2962m.) Aru is 12-13 km., or four hours each way, from Pahalg  m. This is a sloping meadow on the left of River Lidder. It is very pretty, with forests and a small valley. You can even drive up from Pahalg  m to Aru.
- vii) **Chandanwari** (c.9,500') is 16 km. from Pahalg  m. It is best known as the 'roadhead' for the Amarn  th Yatra i.e. it is the place where the 'motorable' road comes to an end. The streams from Shesh Nag and Astanmarg meet here. The wooded Pahalg  m-Chandanwari road runs along the roaring Shesh Nag stream. There used to be huge snow bridges over the stream just beyond Chandanwari, throughout the year, till as recently as 1998. They melted away for the first time because of the heat wave-cum-drought of 1999. In 2003 they started forming again.
- viii) **Shik  rg  h** (lit.: 'a place meant for hunting animals') is 4-6 km. from Pahalg  m and around 6 km. from Tr  l. This is a wildlife reserve. The accommodation is controlled by the Chief Wildlife Warden, TRC, S  rinagar.
- ix) **Phirisan** is 7 km. from Pahalg  m. This is a good 'trout fishing beat'.
- x) **Lake T  rsar** is 35 km. from Pahalg  m. Go first to Aru and then Lidderwat. Then walk through meadows littered with flowers to reach this high-altitude lake. There is a 243m. high ridge nearby, beyond which is Lake M  rsar.

## Day trips from Pahalg  m

  na  tn  g is a very beautiful district. There are several places that you can go to from Pahalg  m or on the way to Pahalg  m or on the way back. These include the shrines of Seer Hamad  n, Bam Zoo, Harut-Marut and Aish Muq  m, and the temples at Mattan. These six places are all on the road between Pahalg  m and the temple of Martand. The secular pleasure resorts and gardens of Achabal, Kokarnag and Verinag can also be done as day trips from Pahalg  m or even from S  rinagar.

## Fishing

There is trout in the Lidder river and the Sheshnag stream. Permits to catch fish can be obtained from the Director, Fisheries, TRC, S  rinagar.



## Other things to do

Pahalgâm is the hub of much activity: camping, fishing, golf (there's a nine-hole course), horse-riding, roller-skating (this facility is available at the Club but is often in disuse) and trekking.

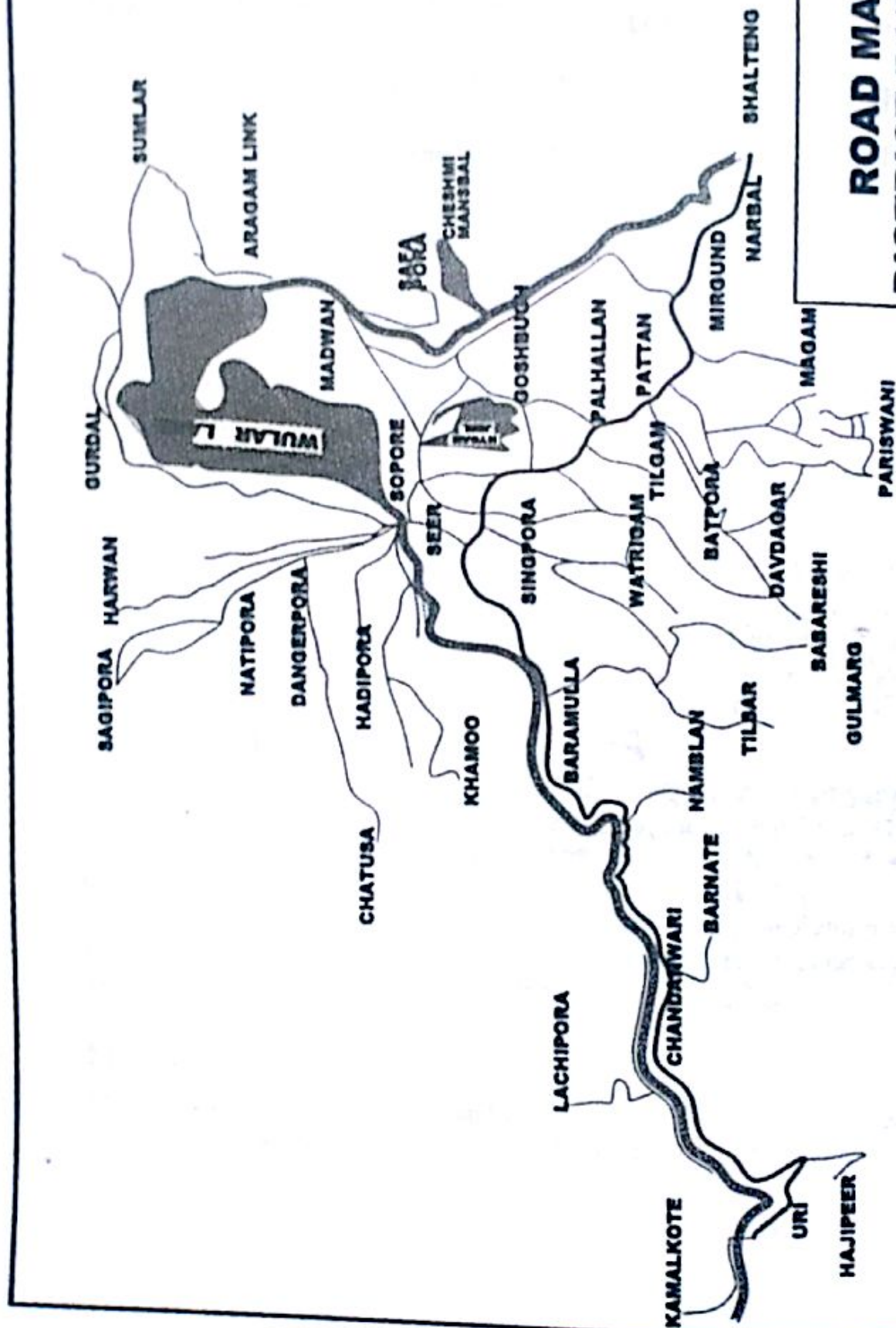
## Club

It is possible to become a temporary member.





# ROAD MAP OF DISTRICT BARAMULLA





## 6

### Bâramullâ

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#### The vital statistics

The oldest inhabited part of the state, Bâramullâ has an area of 4,588 sq. km., of which 2,963 sq. km. are forests. Its population was estimated at 8.61 lakh (0.8 million) in 1991. It has 660 villages as well as seven towns. All but twenty-seven of its villages have electric connections and all but sixteen have facilities for piped drinking water. Some 20.62% of its people were literate in 1981. Agricultural crops are sown on 0.91 lakh hectares in the district, of which 0.44 lakh hectares are irrigated. Orchards—especially apple—occupy a pivotal position in the economy of the district, in particular of affluent Sopore town.

1981 census figures: Total population-6,70,142; Muslims-6,46,77; Hindus-13,513; Sikhs-9,806 (this being the biggest Sikh population in the Valley, and the second highest in the state, after Jammû).

2001 census: Population-11,54,591, Literacy-43.9%

#### History

Bâramullâ town, 49 km. from Srînagar, is among the oldest known urban areas of Kashmîr—possibly the very oldest. Its recorded history goes back to 2306 B.C. when King Bhim Sen established his capital in the vast region that stretches from the present Drangbal (then called Drang) to Kanisporâ. Being at the northern end of the Valley, the town used to be a gateway of sorts to Kashmîr.

While its gateway status brought it commercial benefits, it also meant that whenever Kashmîr was attacked from the north it would be through Bâramullâ town. This series of invasions continued till the tribal raid of 1947. Internal troubles, too, took their toll on Bâramullâ town, hurting its economy. (Frequent warfare has obviously toughened the people of Bâramullâ



because men from this district have traditionally been preferred for recruitment to the army.)

Bâramullâ's golden age was the Buddhist period. Al Beruni, the mediæval Arab scholar, described it as a prosperous trading centre. The Mughals, especially the emperors Akbar and Jehangir, too, patronised it. They would enter the Valley through Pakhil (perhaps Pakhli) and thereafter stay at Bâramullâ for a few days. As a result the town acquired a fairly cosmopolitan character, with Buddhist vihars, Sikh gurudwaras, Hindu pilgrimages, and Muslim shrines and mosques. In the late nineteenth century the church of St. Joseph was constructed.

**Origin of name:** There are several theories regarding the origin of the word 'Bâramullâ'. All that is certain is that the ancient name of the place was 'Varahmula' or 'Varmul'. The theory recorded in ancient texts like the *Rājātaraṅginī* is that during the reign of King Awanti Varman (A.D. 855-883) twelve volcanic eruptions took place at Khadniyar, near Bâramullâ town. 'Bara'/'varah' means 'twelve' and 'mul' refers to the 'holes' (bored by the eruptions). This is the version accepted popularly. According to it the 'Satisar lake' was drained through these twelve holes in the ground.

However, Kalhana also records in the *Rājātaraṅginī* that Kashmir's first *teerath* was established at the place where a passage had been cut through the mountain by the 'Varaha Avatar' of Lord Vishnu. This was the incarnation in which the Lord had descended on earth as a boar. (A *teerath* is a place of Hindu pilgrimage.) In Sanskrit 'Varahamulla' means 'the boar's place'. (Mul means 'place' in Kashmiri.) A third interpretation is that 'var' in Kashmiri refers to the bend (in River Jehlum) that occurs at this 'mul' (place).

**The 'Kashmîr was a lake' theory:** 'Lake Satisar' is not a mere legend. Geological evidence confirms the ancient texts, which say that thousands of years ago all of Kashmir Valley was one big lake (the Satisar), which later got drained somehow.

In this lake, according to local mythology, lived a group of demons led by 'Jalodbhav' (lit.: 'born of the water'), popularly known as 'Jaldev'. These demons would tyrannise the people who lived in the mountains. Along came the great saint Kashyap, after whom, according to one theory, Kashmir got its name. The saint performed some difficult and painful prayers to deliver the people from the demon.

This impressed the Hindu trinity, which consists of the Lords Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. Kashyap was the grandson of Lord Brahma. The trinity came down to 'Satisar' to help him. Lord Indra, the rain god, killed almost all the demons, except Jaldev (lit.: 'the water demon') who escaped into the lake with some companions. Lord Vishnu changed himself into a huge boar



(Varaha) and chased Jaldev for a few thousand years before he succeeded in killing him.

The Lord then hit the mountains with his tail and smashed a pass through them. This allowed the waters of the '*Satisar*' to flow out of what is now the Valley of Kashmîr into the areas now under Pakistani occupation, and beyond. Thus was created the Valley, which was then named 'Kash(yap) Mîr'. The place where Lord Varaha had prised open the mountains with his mighty tail came to be known as '*Varahamula*' (later Bâramullâ).

Miraculously or otherwise, a gash was created in the mountains, which provided access to the Valley from Muzaffarâbâd (POK) and Rawalpindi (Pakistan). It was because of this location that Bâramullâ—and within Bâramullâ the watch-station at Drang (the present Drangbal)—was normally the first in the Valley to receive travellers, saints, scholars, and invaders.

**The Buddhist golden age:** Among the famous people received at Drang was Hiuen Tsang. King Darlabdurana went there to personally welcome the Chinese scholar in A.D. 631. The watch-station continued to perform its functions at least till 1823, when Moorcroft, the British scholar, visited it.

In ancient times, there used to be a major Buddhist centre called Hashikoporâ, also known as Hushkipur. It was across the river from Bâramullâ town, where Ushkara village now is. It was founded by the Indo-Scythian king Hashkha (died A.D. 140), also called Hushki and Huvishka. He also constructed a Buddhist vihar (monastery) there.

With the addition of another two vihars, one each by Queen Dahhana and her brother Prince Jalauka, the place became a major centre of Buddhism. In fact, the baroque terracotta of Hashikoporâ has a prominent place in Indian art. (Some credit King Hashkha with the founding of Bâramullâ itself and claim that Hashikoporâ is the oldest-and seminal-part of the town.) King Lalitaditya got a Buddhist '*stupa*' constructed at Ushkara much later. Only some ruins remain of that.

The renowned King Kanishka built the city of Kanishkaporâ close to Bâramullâ town, where the present day village of Kanis(h)porâ is. This further increased the limits and size of Bâramullâ town. It was in this village that the 4<sup>th</sup> Buddhist conference was held, under the chairmanship of Nagarjuna.

Historian Kalhan says that three Kushân kings founded as many cities in Kashmîr: between Bâramullâ and Srinagar. The kings were (H)ushka, Jushka and Kansihka. There is evidence that these cities had a regular trade with central Asia. The trade route ran through Drass and then Khaltse in Ladâkh.

Excavations at Kanisporâ have yielded several artefacts from Kanishka's period.



*The mediæval era:* Syed Jânbâz Wali, the eminent saint, came to Kashmir in 1421. He chose to headquarter his mission in Bârânullâ, where he died and was buried and where his famous shrine is located.

At the time of the Sikh conquest, Bârânullâ was ruled by a Muslim raja. With major Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist shrines already present in town, an important Sikh gurdwara and a Christian mission were all that were needed to complete Bârânullâ's eclectic ethos.

Guru Hargobind Singh ji, the sixth of Sikhism's ten gurus, visited the town around A.D. 1644. The Chhatti Padshahi ('the sixth emperorship/ empire') Gurudwara was constructed near the Rajghat in honour of that visit. The Sikh General Hari Singh Nalwa (died 1837) made major additions to the gurudwara.

*The Dogrâ era:* In the Dogrâ era Kashmir was divided into just two districts, Bârânullâ and Ânaftnâg (which included Srinagar). However, since ancient times it had been divided into two regions, Kamarajya and Madavarajya, which later came to be respectively called *Kâmrâz* (pron.: kâm-râz; sometimes even 'kâm-râj') and *Mârâz* (pron.: mâ-râz). It is a division that survives in the minds of the people to this day. *Kâmrâz* (or *Kâmrâj* or the north-western part of the Valley, consisted of the belt which includes the erstwhile Bârânullâ, Sopore, Hañdwârâ, Sumbal, Pattan, Lolab, Suibug, Bandipore, Zainageer, Lâr, Beerwa and Khuihama parganas/ tehsils. Or, put another way, *Kâmrâz* roughly corresponds to the present Bârânullâ and Kupwârâ districts. Its Headquarters were at Sopore and that of *Mârâz* at Srinagar.

Missionaries from Europe established St. Joseph's Church and hospital in Bârânullâ in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Bârânullâ town has traditionally been quite treeless. The 1890 *Gazetteer* comments, 'In addition to the waters of the Jehlum, there are numerous wells in the town, which, judging from the length of the leverpole, must be of unusual depth; there is, however, a great want of trees and shade.'

The earthquakes that Bârânullâ is prone to have earned it quite a name. The *Gazetteer* notes, 'It has a picturesque aspect, a damp, cold climate, a celebrity for rain and storms, and a great name for earthquakes. In the summer of 1885 this town [including its ancient fort] was completely ruined by earthquake.... The hills by which it is almost surrounded are bare and without beauty.'



## Shrines

### Muslim shrines

The better known Muslim shrines of the district are:

- Aasâr Sharief at Khwaja Sâheb, Bârânullâ
- Bâbâ Jangi at Shilwat, Sonawari
- Bâbâ Rêshî, near Gulmarg (see 'Bâbâ Rêshî' below)
- Bâbâ Shakur-ud-din Sâheb at Watlab (see main entry on Watlab, later in this chapter)
- Bâbâ Usman Ghani's ziarat at Jahama, Bârânullâ
- Dastgîr Sâheb at Plan, Bandipore
- Dastgîr Sâheb at Qazi Hamam, Bârânullâ
- Hazrat Mîr Syed Ali Hamadâni, Khânqah-e-Moula, Sopore
- Hazrat Sultan-ul-Arifeen's ziarat at Aham Sharief, Bandipore
- Hazrat Sultan-ul-Arifeen's ziarat at Ramporâ, Bandipore
- Hazrat Sultan-ul-Arifeen's ziarat at Tujar, Sopore
- Hazrat Syed Ahmed-ud-Din Sâheb at Bulgam, Bârânullâ
- Hazrat Syed Sâheb at Kreeri
- Imam Bara at Mohalla Sona Buran, Inderkote, Sonawari
- Karim Shah Sâheb at the Qadeem Idgah, Bârânullâ
- Khwaja Hilal Naqshband Sâheb at Nsasbal, Sonawari
- Khwaja Rahim Sâheb at Chewa, Sonawari
- Sofi Satar Sâheb's ziarat at Chakla, Rafiabad
- Syed Ghareeb Sâheb at Gund Nowgam, Sonawari
- Syed Hazrat Sultan's ziarat at Kanisporâ
- Syed Jânbâz Wali at Srînagarporâ, Bârânullâ
- Syed Kirmani in Bârânullâ
- Syed Nalik Bukhari Sâheb at Nadihal, Bârânullâ
- Syed Muhammad Dâniyâl at Talarzoo, Sonawari
- Syed Sâheb at Naid Khai, Sonawari

### Hindu temples

- Asthapan Nund Kishur at Sumbal, Sonawari
- Chhota Âmarnâth at Arin, Bandipore
- Devi temple at Khanporâ, Bârânullâ
- Gosâmi temple at Gosâmi Teing, Bârânullâ
- Pandava temples (ancient) at Boniyar, Uri (see 'Boniyar' below)



### Sikh gurudwaras

- Chhattî Pâdshâhî Gurûdwârâ at Rajghat, Bârânullâ
- Chhattî Pâdshâhî Gurûdwârâ, a kilometre short of Uri.

### Churches

- St. Joseph's Church in Bârânullâ
- St. Mary's, Gulmarg

### Important places of tourist interest

**Athwato:** 68 km. from Srinagar, this fledgeling tourist resort is located on the banks of the Madhumati nallah (stream) near Bandipore.

**Bâbâ Réshî:** *The shrine:* An 1890 description of this famous and spiritually powerful shrine reads thus: 'BapumRéshî [is] the name vulgarly applied to the shrine of Bâbâ Paiyam-ud-din...[which] is prettily situated on a grassy slope, surrounded by a forest... Around the shrine is a cluster of buildings, built of timber, the lintels and door-posts of which are embellished with some elegant carvings.'

Timber? Elegant carvings? The author of the above passage (taken from the *Gazetteer*) would be hard put to recognise the place today, for he had gone on to add: 'Slips of paper, containing prayers, vows, and notifications of pilgrimages made to the shrine by important personages, are pasted on the entrance, and an inscription affixed to the carved doorway states that it was added (in the year 1849 A.D.) by Subbur Réshî, the [then] khalifa or superior of brotherhood... Among the pilgrims are many Hindus... There is a small wooden pavilion for the accommodation of European visitors.'

The cluster of buildings has grown, at the expense of the said grassy slope. These include hostels, some of them built by the Tourism department during my tenure. (I do not accept responsibility for the cement architecture, though.) All pilgrims are given free board and lodging.

There hasn't been a pavilion for Europeans (or, indeed, for any foreign devotee) in several decades. The only thing that hasn't changed is the number of Hindu (Kashmiri Pandit, as well as Punjabi) and Sikh pilgrims. The shrine itself, and thus the carved doorway and inscriptions, got burnt (accidentally) several times. The most recent martyrdom of the shrine was in 1989. A serious and respected Srinagar newspaper had then interpreted this as a sign that several years of misery would follow, as had happened each time this much loved shrine had been gutted before.

A fairly acceptable wooden building came up shortly after the 1989 burning and I even persuaded myself to like it. However, in the mid-1990s the wooden structure was pulled down and a 'modern' brick-and-plaster structure came up in its place.



*The order:* By tradition, forty Réshîs (saints), committed to a life of celibacy, have been attached to the Bâbâ Réshî shrine at any given time. They join as novices at a very young age and they first serve as shepherds or in menial jobs. (In the Indo-Persian tradition children are trained in specialised fields like music, painting, wrestling and mysticism not at schools but by personal tutors, known as 'gurus' or 'ustads'. For the first year or two all that the children are allowed to do are menial tasks such as carrying the master's shoes-and soaking in the atmosphere.) There is a formal hierarchy of ranks among the Réshîs. As and when a vacancy occurs in their ranks it is filled by selection from among the novices. If any of the brotherhood deviates from the binding of celibacy, he is expelled from the community, which is guided by visions and dreams.

Till the early twentieth century, revenues from the neighbouring villages of Tsont Patthar, Al Patthar and Nambal Nar would be earmarked for the maintenance of the shrine. On its part, the Réshîs of the shrine would look after the food and other essential needs of all poor travellers.

*The answering of prayers:* Offerings made at this and other shrines normally consist of money, jewellery or other valuables. However, devotees who go to Bâbâ Réshî to ask for particular boons are required by tradition to sacrifice a sheep and give the priest its right leg, head and skin, keeping the rest for themselves.

The Bâbâ used to cook on an earthen stove, which is still intact. Childless women smear a layer of fresh mud on the stove in the hope that a child will then be born to them. The keepers of the shrine gift some of this extra mud to devotees who, they feel, need special blessings. That way the stove, too, retains its original size.

*The saint:* Bâbâ Payam-ud-din (d. AD 1475) was a disciple of Bab Zain-ud-din Wali aka Zaina Shah (of Aish Muqâm fame).

The Bâbâ belonged to a village called Chhañd-nau (Tshondan), which is near Zakûra (a suburb of Srînagar, just outside the town on the way to Sonamarg-Ladâkh). He was born to a wealthy family. Before he took to religion, the Bâbâ was a leading noble, a vizier of the rank of the Governor of a province.

One day, during a hunt, he saw a long row of ants, each with a grain in its mouth. He got off his horse and kept looking at the ants till the sun set. The Bâbâ then said, 'These ants are working so hard to stock up for the winter. On the other hand we do not stock up for the next world.' Saying that he renounced the material world. For a while he became a disciple of Hazrat Sheikh Zain-ud-Dîn.

The Bâbâ soon became famous for his spirituality. He then sought permission to meditate on the Ranboh (Ranbuah) hill (in parganâ Bâñgal),



hidden from the rest of the world. Khwaja Āzam Dedmari wrote (around 1747) that this was where the *Dévs*<sup>1</sup> used to live. The Bâbâ went to the hill and in a loud voice read the call (*āzân*) for prayers (*namâz*). Dedmari says that the *Dévs* could not 'compete with' this call. They accepted defeat and converted to Islâm.

Hassan, the 19<sup>th</sup> century historian, says that ghosts used to live in Ranboh. They told the Bâbâ that they would not leave Ranboh unless Allah ordered them to do so. So, Bâbâ Payâm-ud-Din prayed to God. A strange sheet of paper then descended from the skies. The ghosts read what was written on that sheet and, without further ado, left Ranboh.

Mian Basheer, the eminent Gujjar leader and religious scholar, told this author that Bâbâ Réshî was married and even had a young son. Once a man came up to the saint and said that the Bâbâ's son had misbehaved with his, the complainant's, daughter. The saint knew that this was true. So, the Bâbâ prayed to God that if the allegation was true, his son should die. And that is what happened. (Hazrat Fariduddin of Kishtwar had a similar fate.) Dedmari does not mention this incident or even say whether the Bâbâ had ever married.

Bâbâ Réshî spent the rest of his life on that isolated hill, where, in 889 Hijri (A.D. 1475), he died.

*The annual urs*: This is celebrated in Poh (December). Attendance is very large. On this occasion people ask for special boons. They vow to make particular offerings if their prayers are answered.

**Boniyar** is 64 km. from Srinagar, on the road to Uri. The temple there is one of the oldest in Kashmir, but in good condition. Little is known about its history, or even its original name. So it has automatically been credited to the Pandavas. The consensus is that it was built around the 5<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.

There is a tall central building, at the centre of a large quadrangle. Around it is a colonnade of pillars, with trefoil-headed recesses in between. Bakaya adds, 'Its cella is of large dimensions 13 sq. ft. (interior). Its walls are supported on a basement 4 ft. sq. It retains a cloistered quadrangle measuring 145' x 120'.'

Earthquakes and other natural calamities have played havoc with the other ancient temples of Bâramullâ in particular and the Valley in general. Besides, the process of weathering is inevitable in a place as cold as Kashmir. The temple at Boniyar is among the few of its vintage in the region to have survived nature. It had restoration efforts to contend with instead.

<sup>1</sup> Dévs are deities of the Hindu pantheon. Sometimes a similar sounding word is used to describe ferocious creatures as well.



In the 1960s one Mr. Khajuria, a senior forest officer, noticed that there was no idol in the temple. Therefore, he installed an idol of Lord Shiva. Units of the Indian Army did the rest. They put 'chips' at the entrance, a marble Nandi bull a little further inside and, in the sanctum, disco lights that blink. They obviously didn't approve of the ancient Indian (and South East Asian) tradition of creating temples out of slabs of rock. They felt that the rocks looked bare. So, they painted much of the temple a deep saffron, plastering over the elegant carvings of the pediment. They added regimental yellow and white stripes on the lower steps. Mr. Khajuria and the army unit have also embedded marble slabs in the structure, proclaiming their "contributions" to the temple.

Maybe they should go over to Angkor Wat with cans of paint and teach UNESCO how to spruce up those dull, grey stone temples.

*Festival. The Boniyar Temple Jātrā:* Pilgrims throng the temple in big numbers during all major festivals. Those who live within commuting distance come every morning.

**Chitter Nar:** 3 km. from Bandipore, this village is known for the density and beauty of its forests, because of which the government has set up a Forest Training School there.

**Delta Mandir:** This is an ancient temple much like the one at Boniyar, and of similar vintage.

## Guréz

The name of this region could possibly have been derived from the Persian word 'Guréz' ('the neglected one' or 'the forsaken land'). This beautiful, W-shaped valley (average altitude: 7,800') in north Kashmir is 86 km. from Bandipore on the Bandipore-Gilgit road. It is cut off from the rest of the world for four or five months every winter when snow blocks the passes leading to it. There are mountains all around, notably the Haramukh, the Nanga Parbat and the Shamsabari. They add to the beauty of the valley but they also make it almost impossible to reach (or get out of) in winter. Hence the feeling of neglect that the local people have.

The Kishen Ganga passes through the base and western arm of Guréz (also spelt Gurais). The Burzil stream, too, flows through the western arm. The people speak the Shina language.

The name by which the people of Guréz call their valley is 'go-harāi' (cow-pasture), not 'Guréz.'

*History:* Guréz valley was on the segment of the ancient Silk Route that went from the plains of Kashmir to Gilgit and then Káshgar. Hundreds of stone inscriptions in Kharoshthi, Brahmi, Hebrew and Tibetan have been found in the valleys north of Guréz, along the Silk Route, especially in Chilas (POK).



These inscriptions contain priceless information about the history of Buddhism in ancient Kashmir. They add to our knowledge about the various Buddhist Councils that were held between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD and how in the 6th century missionaries took Buddhism over to Tibet. The last Buddhist Council was probably held at Kanzilwan.

Dâwar is an important archaeological site. Downstream along River Kishenganga are the ruins of the ancient Sharadâ University.

The earliest reference to this area is in the *Rājātaraṅginī* which calls it 'Urasa'. In mediæval times the Gaor Aman rajas of Gilgit ruled over Guréz, through a Nawab (the only Nawab I have heard of in all of J&K). The Malik dynasty of Nawabs must have begun around 1690 or 1700.

Malik Dilawar, the seventh or eighth Nawab, was invited to Srinagar and deceitfully imprisoned by Sheikh Ghulam Mohiuddin, the Sikhs' governor of Kashmir (1842-1845). Dilawar managed to escape after three years in jail. He retreated to the mountains north of the Kishen Ganga and gathered a small band of men. However, since the army of the Sikh government heavily outnumbered his force, he retreated to Gilgit, where he was murdered.

At the time Dilawar's son, Malik Wafadar, was a minor and was held hostage by the new Governor of Kashmir. When Wafadar reached adulthood the Mahārājā appointed him the 'Thanedar' of Guréz valley. This was the most powerful position in the police hierarchy of Guréz. However, in the context of the State as a whole it was at best a middle-ranking office. Thus ended the line of the Guréz Nawabs.

During the 1990s, Guréz stayed away from militancy and was uniquely peaceful.

*The valley:* The Guréz valley is less than two kilometres at its widest. It stretches from the Guréz Fort in the south to below Sirdari, at elevations between 7,000 and 8,200 feet. From Srinagar you have to travel to Bandipore and then go over the Rajdiangan (Razdan) pass to cross into Guréz. When you do so you will see a river rushing through a green meadow and groves of walnut and willow trees. On both sides there are rugged limestone mountain peaks, some of their ledges covered with fir trees. In the north there is a huge accumulation of alluvium, through which the Burzil stream has bored a path for itself. In the south-east there is a very tall limestone mountain peak which separates the Tilail valley from Guréz.

The people of Guréz are Dards as well as Kashmiris. Their traditional dress is different from that in the plains of Kashmir. They wear a 'choga' (coat) with a belt (cummerbund) tied at the centre. Their pyjamas are loose and of calf-length. While the Kashmiris have traditionally worn turbans as in the rest of north India, the Dards wear a distinctive cap.



The harsh winters mentioned above, with little sunshine for days at end, and little rain at other times, make agriculture difficult. However, millet, buckwheat and peas are grown in the summers.

**Trees:** Willows, some crab-apples and pear trees are found here and there. The western portion, between Kanzalwan and Sirdari, is beautiful, with the river passing through thick forests of pine and cedar. Strawberries, as well as some raspberries and wild currants also grow in the west. Inferior walnut trees are to be found in the west and south. The aromatic, whitish-green *burrish* plant grows plentifully on the slopes in the north.

Because of its rich pastures, Guréz supports cattle and sheep in large numbers. Traditionally the people of Guréz would sell their milk, meat and wool in the plains of Kashmir and purchase grains with the money thus earned.

**The Guréz fort: (7,800')** This fort, at the southern end of the valley, is where the Nawabs of Guréz used to live. It has been built atop a hillock that is some 25 metres above the left bank of the Kishen Ganga.

**Kishen Ganga:** (See the section on the 'Rivers of Kashmir'.)

**Mânasbal Lake:** This deep lake is 32 km. from Srinagar, on the road to Bandipore and in the same direction as the Wular lake. It is about 4 km. long and 1.2 km. wide. Mânasbal is famous for its clean waters, water-nuts and lotus roots (*nadru*), as well as white and red lotus flowers, which start blossoming in early July. Migratory and other birds abound. The historic Jharokhbal park (aka Jaregba) is located nearby.

The ruins of the Badshah Bâgh include the remains of a palace that was never completed, and a garden which had been built at the behest of Emperor Jehangir and Noor Jehân. N.L. Bakaya calls the ruins on the northern banks the 'Darogabagh'.

Mânas means 'mountain' and 'bal' means 'lake' (or even 'place'). Thus, the lake's name means 'the mountain lake'. Bakaya says that the word has been derived from the Sanskrit '*Mânassasarovarâs*' or '*Mansarover*'.

Andrew Wilson wrote in 1875 that Mânasbal's 'shores are singularly suggestive of peacefulness and solitude.' Another 19th century British writer described the lake as 'secluded, profound, silent.' It still is.

The Mânasbal is connected to the Jehlum by a mile-long canal half a kilometre below Sumbal. Being up to 12.8 metres deep, it is the deepest lake in all Kashmir. According to Hindu mythology the lake is bottomless. A saint is said to have spent many years fashioning a plumb line long enough to touch the bottom. Each time he tried, the line was found wanting and short. In desperation he jumped into the lake, never to be seen again.

The waters of the Mânasbal remain a clear deep-green because they come from springs inside the lake. Some of these springs can be seen, 'like miniature



fountains', at the edges of the lake when its waters are low. In the south is a range of hills, including the 6,200', conical Aha Tung/ Ahateng peak, which can be seen from several other parts of the Valley as well. In the east is the Baladar range of mountains. From there, the Amrawati stream forms a 'fine cataract' which falls over a steep, white cliff made of limestone, into the lake below. Near this waterfall is a small Hindu ruin.

There is a Tourist Bungalow near the lake. It is not likely to be functional till mass tourism resumes.

**Nârâyan Thal temple, the:** The 6th century A.D. scripture, the *Nilmat Puran*, mentions this temple, though only casually. The temple, thus, dates to at least before then. It has been built some 2 km. from Bârânullâ town, in the hollow of a hill that towers above it. The temple is on the right bank of the Jehlum.

There is a spring in the hill. Its waters form a stream and flow down towards the temple. There these waters stay for a while in a tank that has been built around the temple. (Several temples of the Kashmîrî Pandits have been built in a similar fashion.)

The temple is not very big. It measures 13' x 13'. There used to be a well-attended annual festival at the temple.

**Parihâsporâ:** (21km. from Srinagar, 3 km. off the Srinagar-Bârânullâ road.) There are two sets of ruins here. Each group is on top of a low hillock and each hillock can be seen from the other. The view from both is panoramic. (Stalin did something similar in Moscow: he built his grandest monuments atop hillocks.)

The main ruins consist of the grand foundations and bases of three stone temples: and lots of rubble. A couple of steps, as grand and wide as the foundations themselves, obviously leading to the sanctum, are still intact. The walls and superstructure are not.

The minor ruins are the base of a stone temple. Just the foundation is visible, and that barely. I found a stone Shivling amidst the rubble. Obviously, this was a Shiva temple. (See also 'The History of Kashmir' and the entry on Pattan.)

**Pattan** (5,200' above the m.s.l.) This ancient town, 27 km. from Srinagar, or 23 km. from Bârânullâ, is located on the Srinagar-Uri National Highway. 1981 population: 5,017.

Pattan was, for a little more than a decade, the capital of Kashmir. This was during the reign of King Shankarverman (AD 889-902) when it was called Shankarpura. The king, along with his queen Sugandha, got two Shiva temples built here, and called them Shankar Gauresh and Sugandheshvar. These could well be the two grand temples the ruins of which are still found in the town. Their architecture is of the same style as



at Martand. Both temples are on the main road, separated from each other by less than a kilometre. The walls are intact and the ruins are in as good shape as any of that era in Kashmir.

Pattan means 'the pass,' not in the sense of a mountain pass but because it was where the roads that connected the two ends of the Valley met. Before roads were built, the best way of travelling in the Valley was by boat—on rivers or specially built canals. Pattan is at the head of a canal that leads to the Jehlum. However, boats can ply on this canal only for a few weeks in a year when the waters of the melting snow make that possible.

It probably was because of this limitation that Shankarpura could not remain the capital of Kashmir for long. Or it could have been God's displeasure at the building of this town and its temples 'from the materials [Shankar] had obtained from the plunder of the town and temples of [nearby] Parihâsapura' (Sufi).

After the Mughal emperor Akbar conquered Kashmir he got his legendary land revenue minister Diwan Todar Mal to organise the villages (and towns) of Kashmir into 'districts', as in the rest of Mughal India. Accordingly, Todar Mal divided the Valley into 33 *parganas* (groups of villages). Someone noticed that Pattan had, accidentally, not been assigned to any *pargana*. So, Todar Mal decreed that Pattan would, all by itself, be the 34th *paragana*.

In the north of the village is the '*peerzadas*' hamlet called Gasipura near which are two stone pillars that really are miniature temples. The legend is that these are two evil persons who were turned into stone because of their sins.

**Rampur:** (4,900'; 80 km. from Srinagar.) This is a green village between Uri and Bâramullâ town on the old Rawalpindi road. It was a popular halting place. Therefore, the Dogrâs built what is now a heritage dak-bungalow. Arora noted in 1940 that it had 'an old temple [which is] supposed to be the most perfect shrine of its kind in India.'

It is possible to travel from here to Gulmarg, through Naoshera. The ascent after Naoshera is steep. Later the path goes through pine forests and meadows.

**Tilail** is a long, thin valley that is less than 1.5 km. at its widest. The newly formed River Kishen Ganga runs through it. Guréz is to the north-west of Tilail. Tall mountains surround the valley. Most of them have always been quite treeless because they face the south or, in the case of some west facing slopes, because they are extremely steep. Some mountains in the valley are wooded.

Wild pears and strawberries grow in the region. Roses are found everywhere, and in different colours. Wild grasses and other flowers are also everywhere in summer and spring.



Historically, Tilail has often been subject to the king of Skardu. Though a Muslim, the king was called '*gya(l)po*'. During the Dogrâ era, Tilail was placed under the '*thana*' (police station) of Budgam.

*How to get there:* Tilail lies on the route between Guréz and Drass. Thus Tilail can be reached from either side. See also 'Tilail' under 'Bârânullâ' in the chapter on Trekking.

The people of Tilail are of semi-Mongoloid stock and speak '*Sheena*', the language of the Dards. They make woollens during the long winter, and sell or barter these with the people of the plains of Kashmir and, before 1947, Skardu. They rear sheep in big enough numbers to have always been a major source of live animals for the butchers of Kashmir.

Uri (4,400') is 101 km. from Srinagar and 46 km. from Bârânullâ town. It is a border town located on the left bank of the Jehlum on the Srinagar-Rawalpindi (Pakistan) highway. It is considerably warmer than the rest of the Valley of Kashmir. 1981 population: 3,072.

Uri is supposed to receive snowfall at most once in a decade or so. And yet when I went there in January 2002, there was more than a foot of snow everywhere, far more than what Bârânullâ had that day and infinitely more so than Srinagar.

This used to be a flourishing, cosmopolitan trading centre till 1947. Muslims (Kashmiris as well as Paharhis), Hindus (Pandits as well as Khattris) and Sikhs were locked together by friendship and commerce. The Mahârâjâ of neighbouring Poonch had built an elegant 'Poonch House' here. (It is now an army mess.) Uri was one of the few places in Kashmir to have a petrol pump in that era. An old road connected it with the Haji Pir pass, which could be reached in two hours.

In 1947, 'tribesmen' controlled by the Pakistan Army burnt down much of the town, including its historical '*mandi*' (marketplace). Till then the town had a unique position on the Srinagar-Muzaffarâbâd route. After Pakistan annexed the Muzaffarâbâd area and shut its border with India, Uri was reduced to a remote 'border' town. The Line of Control is just 3.5 km. from the town.

Uri retains its old tolerant character to this day. It did not take to militancy in the 1990s and most of the Hindus stayed on, instead of migrating.

The road to Muzaffarâbâd in POK is on the right bank of the Jehlum. There is also a road to Poonch, through the Haji Pir pass.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Dogrâ Mahârâjâs built the Electric Power Station at Mahora/ Mohura. It has a place in history both because it was one of the earliest hydro-electric power generators in the state and partly because of the tribal raid of October 1947. The water is obtained from the Jehlum. The fall is of more than 100 metres.



In 1997, the Government of India commissioned a major hydro-electric project, with the help of Swedish engineers.

Close to Mohura is a village called Gingil. In it are the ruins of monuments from the 8<sup>th</sup>/ 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

*History:* Till the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Sikhs conquered Kashmîr, Uri and its neighbourhood were ruled by a '*Raja*'. There were three claimants to the Uri throne. Two of them (the Khân brothers, Ghulam Ali and Sarfaraz) fled Uri when the Sikh army led by General Hari Singh Nalwa advanced towards their kingdom.

Only Muzaffar Khân, by then an old man, stayed on. He was the son of the third claimant, Sirbalan Khân, and the nephew of the Khân brothers. Muzaffar led Nalwa and his force to his uncle Ghulam Ali's hideout in the mountains. Ghulam Ali was imprisoned and sent to Lahore. No one knows what happened to Sarfaraz.

The Sikhs rewarded Muzaffar by making him the '*Raja*'. Muzaffar would collect roughly Rs.7,000 as revenue every year. He agreed to give the major share (Rs. 4,000) to his Sikh overlords. Muzaffar had at least two wives, one of whom tried to wrest the throne for her own sons, Nawab and Jawahar. She did not want her stepson Ata Muhammad to be the king. So, she asked Sheikh Imam-ud-Din, the Governor of Kashmîr (1845-46), to help her dethrone her husband and install one of her sons in his stead. Her intrigues became public and were thwarted. However, a rattled Muzaffar found it prudent to build bridges and ally with the Sheikh.

**Watlab** is 56 km. from Srinagar on the Sopore-Bandipore road and 8 km. from Sopore itself. However, the boat journey between Sopore and Watlab takes as much as four hours, because it is upstream. There is a Government Rest House at Watlab.

This is a picturesque village to the north of the Wular lake and south of the Shakur-ud-din hill, which can be climbed from the village. The hill takes its name from the famous saint Bâbâ Shakur-ud-din Sâheb, whose tomb is located close to its top. From the shrine you will get an excellent view of the Wular lake and the Haramukh range.

### **Wular Lake**

The 'lily-embroidered' Wular is the largest fresh water lake in Asia. It is 5,180 feet above the msl and 54 km. from Srinagar. Normally the lake is 20.13 km. long and 8.05 km. wide. The circumference of this elliptical lake normally is 48 km. and its average depth around 4 metres. Its normal area is 125 sq. km. Other estimates variously put it as 16 km. long and 8 km. wide or 24 km. long and 10 km. wide. In any case its area increases by nine times—that's right, by 900%—during the floods. The Wular thus functions as a flood reservoir. That is why you will find considerable silt everywhere.



It is at its deepest (5 metres) on its western side, i.e. opposite the Shakur-ud-din hill. Located between Bandipore and Sopore, it is 33 km. by road from Srinagar City. The other method of getting there is by a 10-hour boat ride on the River Jehlum. (Motor-powered boats reach considerably faster.) The Wular is supposed to be one of the 'last relics' of the pre-historic '*Satisar Lake*' mentioned above.

*History:* Wular's ancient name was '*Mahapadma-saras*', after its presiding deity. The word 'Wular' is perhaps a corruption of the Sanskrit *ullola* ('turbulent' or 'with high waves'). Turbulence is occasional in this otherwise calm lake. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh lost 300 boats carrying his troops and supplies. Navigation on the lake can be dangerous when torrents of water suddenly come down from the mountains around it.

At the centre of the lake is an artificial island, Zaina Lank (rhymes with 'monk'). It was built in 1443 by Kashmir's celebrated King Zain-ul-Abedin (a.k.a. Budshah), after whom it takes its name. It is 'used by boatmen who dread the waves of the lake in storm though in the dry season it is no more than an island' (G.M.D. Sufi).

It is said that Sundarsen, a tyrannical king, used to live on a similar, older island till it was submerged following the curse of a saint called Kalâl.

An alternate version goes like this: Sadangula, the Naga (serpent) king of Wular, was exiled from the island. A town called Chandrapura was built where his capital had stood. Later, Neel, the Chief of the Naga serpents of Kashmir, asked a Naga called Mahapadam to take the island over. Mahapadam disguised himself as a Brâhmin and went to the court of Viswagasu, the then king of Wular. He asked to be allowed to live in Chandrapura. The king agreed. Mahapadam then told the king who he really was. He also asked to be allowed to submerge the island. The people of the island were evacuated and Mahapadam literally took the place over. The island was drowned inside the lake, which came to be named after him for several centuries after that.

The *Râjâtaraṅginî* records a third legend as well. Apparently a Dravidian sorcerer threatened to dry up the lake. Mahapadam appeared in King Jayapida's dream and asked for protection. In return he promised to lead the king to a goldmine. Jayapida agreed to help. However, he was also curious to see the sorcerer's magic. So, he first allowed the sorcerer to desiccate the lake. The water-serpent's family began to writhe on the bed of the now waterless lake. This hurt the Naga. Jayapida quickly got the lake restored. However, Mahapadam no longer felt bound to implement his original promise. He merely showed the king a copper mine instead.

Legends apart, it is almost certain that an ancient city-called '*Sindmatnagar*' by some historians-was submerged in the lake. The floods



that often plague Wular probably sank it. However, some believe that it was sunk by volcanic upheavals. Zain-ul-Abedin sent divers down to lay the foundations of the present island at the very spot where Sundarsen's palace-complex had once stood. They found not only the ruins of a temple (which they filled up with stones to build the island on), but also two idols of solid gold, which paid for the construction of the Lank. Zain-ul-Abedin got a palace and a mosque built on the Lank, ruins of which can still be seen. The pious king would often go to the island for forty-day meditation spells.

*Fish and water plants:* This gigantic lake produces water-nuts (*singharas*) and large quantities of fish. The people of the numerous villages on its shores eat and sell both. These fish include the *sattar gad* and the *chhari gad*, both of which are caught by net and hook; the *pikut gad*, which can only be netted; and the *chash gad* and the *harj*, for which hooks are used. The larger fish are caught with spears. The nets are shaped like very large cones and are managed by men sitting in at least two boats brought fairly close together. Lotuses are found in plenty.

*Birds:* Water-fowls come in large numbers in the autumn. In early spring they fly northwards across the Himâlayas to the plains of Yarqand, Kashghar and Mogulistan. Like First World travellers going to less developed countries, these birds stock up for their journey through the relatively barren Tibet. They take *singharas* along in their bills. As a result, the shells of these water-nuts mark the places where they camp en route. The Kashmiris would traditionally hunt water-fowls with very long matchlocks. Swans, geese and a variety of seagulls are commonly found. These seagulls breed in the Wular area and lay their eggs on the thickly matted leaves of the water plants.

*Sources and hydrology:* The Bohnar, Madhumati and Erin nallahs (streams) enter the lake from the east, while the Jehlum passes through it in the south. The Wular 'like every other lake surrounded by mountains, is liable to the action of sudden and furious hurricanes that sweep over it with such extraordinary violence that no boatman can be induced to face it. This fact led to the construction, in very early times, of the Noru canal, whereby, 'when the waters are high, the passage of the lake may be avoided.' (*The Gazetteer*, 1890.)

The banks of the lake are very marshy. The rains, snow and streams bring soil down from the mountains and deposit it on these shores every year. This silts up the lake, especially on the Bandipore side. However, the water is generally clear and, towards the centre, of a deep green colour. Some land springs can be seen bubbling nearby.

*How to get there/ excursions:* There's no place to stay in near the lake, unless you bring your own tent. So you might want to plan a day return. The traditional tourist excursion has been thus:



Leave Srinagar by chartered bus or taxi or your own vehicle. Go past the Anchar Lake. Cross River Sind at Dodarhom. Then go to Tulmula (Kheer Bhawâni: see 'Srinagar' district). Soon you'll enter Bâramullâ district. Safapur (see 'Mânasbal' in this chapter) will be the next major stop. Bandipore follows. The road now goes up a mountain and then through the Rajdiangan (also Rajadanangan) pass. The Guréz valley lies beyond. However, take the road to Watlab instead. It will be time for lunch by now. Sopore and then Pattan are the next major towns. The lake will be the next, and last, stop.

You can return to Srinagar by the late evening as long as you don't linger too long at the places en route. (There are separate entries on each of these places-except the pass-in the chapters on 'Srinagar' and 'Bâramullâ' districts.)

### Other historical towns

**Andarkot:** King Jayapida founded this town as his capital in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. He named it Jayapidapore. He constructed a fort in the middle of a swamp to give it additional protection from enemies. For that reason, over the centuries, several fugitive rulers have sought shelter here. Shams-ud-Din, for instance, arrested Queen Kota Rani here. Khalid Bashir writes, 'It is said that when [ancient engineer Suyya] diverted the course of the [Jehlum] from [Parihaspura] to Shadipore, the city of Jayapidapore lost its glory. [Before that River Sind would merge with the Jehlum] at Tregam, [2km.] south-west of Shadipore, and the river, flowing through Naid Khai, would join the Ningli stream before meeting with the Wular.'

There is a canal to the east of Naid Khai. (It leads to below Sumbal.) The ruins of Andarkot are close to that point.

**Bandipore** is 57 km. from Srinagar proper. It is also spelt Bandipur and Bandipura. Roads to Gilgit, Skardu (both in POK) and Guréz (60 km. on foot or 86 km. by motorable road) emanate from Bandipore. Sopore is 25 km. away. There is also a road from here to the Gangabal lake atop the Haramukh mountain.

This town in northern Kashmir is locally called 'the Port on the Wular lake.' It is located on the eastern bank of the Wular, between two of the streams that feed it, the Erin and Bandipura nallahs. Bakaya says that Bandipore is on the banks of the 'Madamati' stream. It is at the feet of the Tragbal mountain.

Because it is the pivot of a network of roads, Bandipore has traditionally been an important trading centre. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its importance diminished, possibly because other routes were found. This reduced the once 'large and flourishing town' to 'a village of log huts'. When the water is high the Bandipura stream gets quite close to the town. At other times the lake is at some distance (up to 3 km.) from the town. Vigne (late 19<sup>th</sup>



century) attributed this 'diminution' to 'the wearing away of the rocky bottom of the bed of the Jehlum in the Bâramullâ pass'.

Mulberries and cherries are grown in abundance. Bandipore has a Mughal-style garden. 1981 population: 14,218.

**Bâramullâ town:** (5,100 feet above msl.) 55 km. from Srinagar, this is an important trading centre on the Srinagar-Uri road. 1981 population: 33,945. It is located on the banks of the Jehlum. Printed *gabbas* are a speciality of Bâramullâ. (Gabbas are carpets made of recycled, old woollen blankets. See 'Handicrafts'.)

For historical and other details, see the first section of this chapter. It will be noticed that the town is steeped in history. Remnants of that past can still be seen. There is a *kadal* (Kashmiri style bridge) in front of the ruins of the Sikh fort. An old *caravanserai* is close to it. The old gateway is what is left of an ancient fort. Also in the town are springs with sulphurated hydrogen.

This cosmopolitan town has three famous shrines at a short distance from one another, forming a triangle. They represent the Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh faiths. The latter two face each other on opposite banks of the Jehlum. St. Joseph's Church was the natural outcome of the town's tolerant traditions.

*Shrine of Syed Jânbâz Wali:* Syed Muhammad Rifaye alias Syed Yousuf, a great saint and scholar, migrated to Kashmir from the Middle East, probably Ispahân. 'Jânbâz' means 'dare-devil' or, literally, 'a person who plays with his own life.' 'Wali', of course, means 'saint'. The Syed came to be called 'Jânbâz Wali' because his spiritual practices involved enormous hardship and self-denial. This won him the respect of the people.

The saint was buried at this shrine, which has been built close to the left bank of the Jehlum. Every year, on the death anniversary of the saint, people from the neighbouring areas gather at the shrine to seek his blessings. A community kitchen is established on the occasion. Some rice is cooked in a large copper cauldron, which is as old as the shrine itself. It can hold two maunds of rice at a time.

The entrance of the shrine is brightly coloured in the style that prevailed till the 1950s. The courtyard has graves, many of them covered with slabs of slate, known throughout Kashmir as 'Bâramullâ stone.' The shrine itself is green and in the traditional style. One of its highlights is a rectangular 'yoni' made of devri stone (expensive granite). This is an integral part of all Shiva temples. Its presence in the shrine of a Central Asian Muslim saint speaks volumes about those syncretic times and this great shrine.

**Safapur:** See 'Mânasbal' above.

**Shadipore:** (25 km. from Srinagar.) Emperor Akbar went to this major village to enjoy the shade of its great Chinâr grove. Sultan Shihab-ud-Din (14<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) founded the town and named it after himself. River Sind



merges with the Jehlum here. People often moor houseboats here, in the waters of the Sind. The ruins of Parihaspora can be seen from here. A few hours' upstream boat ride on the Sind leads to Ganderbal.

**Sopore:** (48 km. from Srinagar. 1981 population: 33,584, which makes it a large town by the standards of the state.) Sopore owes its considerable affluence to apples. Because of this wealth, which came its way mainly in the twentieth century, the local people nicknamed their town 'Little London' at a time when London was still the centre of the Indian universe. Apples have always grown here, but it was only in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that a huge pan-Indian market was discovered for them. Sopore is generally known in Kashmir as 'the apple town'.

The town has been built on both banks of the Jehlum, at the point where it leaves the Wular lake. The average depth of the river while in Sopore town is 9 metres. Sopore is easily the biggest trading centre in present-day north Kashmir. It is famous for its fish as well. Politically it has been associated with the right-wing, Jamât-e-Islâmi. The town was overrun by Afghan and other militants in the early 1990s. The Indian Army expelled the militants in the winter of 1993.

*History:* The name: Sopore was once called '*Surpura*', probably after its founder '*Sura*', a minister of King Awanti Varman (A.D. 855-883). The ancient town of Kâmbuva had existed at the same site during the preceding centuries. According to a more likely theory the name of the 'founder' was Suyya. He was Awanti Varman's chief engineer, and the original name of the town was Suyyapur. Suyya got removed the boulders that would block the flow of the Jehlum. As a result areas the Jehlum's waters became available for cultivation and living.

Suyya built the Naru canal more for transportation-to enable boats to ply from Srinagar to Sopore-than for irrigation. Because of the canal boatmen no longer had to cross the dangerous Wular lake, the edge of which is only a few miles away.

Sopore was the Headquarters of what used to be the Kâmrâz/ Kâmrâj division of Kashmir. King Zain-ul-Abedin got a bridge built over the Jehlum in 1460. Sultan Hassan Shah (1472-1484) built a palace there, of which nothing survives. There used to be a fort, which was destroyed in the 1885 earthquake.

This fort had seen much action, especially during Zain-ul-Abedin's last years when his favourite son, Haji Khân, revolted against him. Haji was then vanquished at Sopore by Adam Khân, a son whom the king could thitherto not stand. The Hari Singh Bagh (garden), '*a baradari*' (pavilion) on the banks of the river in Chinkipur, and a mosque with gilded spires are among the attractions of the town.



*Trips out of Sopore:* The journey from Sopore to Srinagar takes 14 hours by paddle-boat; and that from Sopore to Bâramullâ 3½ hours. The return journey can be twice as long in both cases. It is possible to travel by boat on this canal to Shadipur, too, when the water is high enough.

From here one can go by road to the Karnah valley through Shalurâh and the Nattishannar Gali. A less popular route is through the Tootmari Gali. Bandipore is 25 km. from here, along the shores of the Wular Lake. Another equally long road leads to Gulmarg.

Sopore has traditionally been one of the starting points for trips to Lolab and Nagmarg.

*The Khânqâh of Sopore:* Sultan Sikander, King of Kashmîr (15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) built this shrine/mosque. In this he was inspired by Mir Syed Muhammad Hamadani. In 1884/5 there was a major earthquake in the district, because of which the shrine was destroyed. However, it was built again and augmented over the years.

There are congregational prayers held every Friday and on Muslim festivals. However, on the sixth day of the *Hijri* month of Zilhaj there is a major gathering to observe the death anniversary of Shah-i-Hamadan, who was the father of the Mir and one of the greatest Muslim saints to have visited Kashmîr.

*Climate:* Arora writes, 'The neighbourhood of Sopore is swampy but its climate is healthy and the breeze refreshing coming from the Wular lake.'

**Sumbal:** (Roughly 30 km. north of Srinagar; 5 km. from Shadipore.) The shrine of *Syed Hilal Naqshbandi* is in Sumbal, close to the Manasbal lake. Syed Hilal was a mystic of the Naqshbandi order. He was not an ethnic Kashmîrî. However, it is not clear where he came here from. The Syed is entombed here. His piety and scholarship won him a large following. The urs of the saint falls on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the second lunar month (Safar). It is a major event in the Sumbal-Manasbal area.

The tomb of Ahmed Sâheb on the left bank of the Jehlum is one of the town's other attractions. A narrow channel links Lake Manasbal and the Jehlum here.

The bridge under the Chinâr groves and the area around it has since the Dogrâ era been used by adventure tourists to set up camp. Tourists as well as local people fish near this spot.



# 7

## Gulmarg

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(8,700 feet/ 2,730m.; 57 km. from Srinagar.) Gulmarg is Kashmir's third most popular tourist resort, after Srinagar and Pahalgâm. Gulmarg literally means 'the meadow of flowers'. This meadow on the Pir Panjal mountains, shaped like the figure '8', is more than 3 km. long and at its widest is almost 2 km. in breadth. On all sides there are mountains and forests of deodhar and pine.

Being about 3,000' higher than Srinagar, it is much colder: which means that in summer it is far more pleasant, and in winter it receives far more snow, and much earlier. That makes it an ideal skiing resort. The same '8'-shaped bowl which has flat, green downs in summer gets converted into 'baby' slopes for first-time skiers from January to March (sometimes till early April). For expert skiers the nearby mountains become world-class slopes.

As a result, Gulmarg would attract British and other European tourists before Independence. They preferred its quietness to the hustle and bustle of Srinagar and Pahalgâm, which Indians revel in. As early as in 1939, at a meeting in London of the East India Association, Sir William Barton, a retired official, commented, 'In Gulmarg, the winter sport industry has been initiated. Here is a very valuable invisible export...'

The poet-king Yusuf Shah Chak (late 16<sup>th</sup> century) would visit this place, accompanied by Habba Khatoon, in order 'to enjoy life', says historian Dr. G.M.D. Sufi. It was then called Gaurimarg (the meadow of Gauri, wife of Lord Shiva). It was Yusuf who, in 1581, renamed it Gulmarg. This beautiful meadow had been, on occasion, used as a bloody battlefield even before Yusuf's time.

At one end is the bank of a stream where Emperor Jehangir and his wife, the Empress Noor Jehân, once pitched their tents and camped for a while. Jehangir was able to collect 21 different kinds of flowers from here during a single visit.



It is possible to trek from here to Poonch.

### How to get there

Only by road or helicopter. You can take a taxi or bus from Srinagar, Tangmarg or Baramulla. Helicopter services are not regular.

*From Srinagar:* It takes around 90 minutes by car from Srinagar. En route you will pass the Hokersa Wetland Reserve. For a considerable part of your journey the water table on both sides of the road will be noticeably high because of the wetland.

Several trekking/ country routes also lead to Gulmarg.

### Where to stay

- i) There are about a dozen private hotels in Gulmarg. Lower income Indian tourists generally tend to avoid spending nights at Gulmarg.
- ii) Self-catering huts: The public-sector JKTDC lets out one-, two- and three-bedroom huts, with attached kitchens.
- iii) The JKTDC also rents out rooms in the Gulmarg club.

The printed tariff generally applies only for five months a year: May, June, August, September and October. The trade often gives a 25% discount during the remaining months. Sometimes tourists from within the state are offered a 50% discount in July, when schools in Kashmir close for vacations. However, in winter you might have to pay extra for heating.

### Climate and clothing

Gulmarg is at a much higher altitude than Srinagar. Therefore, it is several degrees colder. It often rains in the afternoons in summer. More than a raincoat, this means that you might need light woollens in the evenings even in summer.

### What to do in Gulmarg

#### Club

Temporary memberships are available at the Gulmarg Club and at the Golf Club.

#### Cable Car

Though essentially meant to carry skiers uphill, a joyride in the Gulmarg Cable Car has become a tourist attraction in itself. There are sixty 'cable cars' or 'gondolas'. Therefore, you never have to wait for more than a minute for the next one to come along and carry you from 2,690m. to 3,090m.



## Golf

Gulmarg has traditionally boasted of having the world's highest 18-hole golf course. (Leh's brown golf-course has since overtaken it. Gulmarg's is still the highest *green* course in the world.) The Gulmarg course was a favourite of the officers of the British Raj. Peter Thompson, the Australian expert, redid it in the 1980s. From 1997 onwards, Gulmarg and, with it, the golf course, was overwhelmed by tourists, mainly from within the state. Therefore, golfers now have to sacrifice part of this heritage course on weekends and public holidays. The affected holes will some day shift to the nearby Leopard valley.

You will do well to bring your own golf clubs, though some clubs and balls can be hired at Gulmarg itself.

The High Altitude Cosmic Rays Research Laboratory is located here.

## Pony rides

Normally there are government-approved rates, by the hour.

## Skiing

The skiing season theoretically begins around the 15<sup>th</sup> December and continues till around the 15<sup>th</sup> April. However, the first three and last three weeks of the season mentioned sometimes do not receive enough (or soft enough) snow to ski on. This happens all over the world. So please check before leaving home. Skiing is sometimes not possible after mid-March. On the other hand in years like 2003 it continued till late April.

Since 1997, a world-class cable car ('gondola') has been functioning. Its tickets are ridiculously cheap by international standards. In summer the cars carry joyriders. In the winters skiers use them to go uphill. Before 1997, skiers would use the (cheaper) chair-lift and the T-bar ski lift. These are being phased out gradually.

The slopes have runs ranging from 200m. to 900m. They, thus, cater to beginners as well as more advanced skiers.

You can hire imported skis and related equipment (gloves, boots, ski sticks, jacket, trousers, full skiing suits and snow-glasses). Hire charges, again, are among the lowest in the world. Rates are lower still for old equipment. You can hire the equipment for half a day, a full day or 5 days (or a combination thereof). Children are charged around half as much as adults.

The Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering trains all comers in skiing; however, please verify if they are conducting courses during the specific period that you intend to be there for. The Youth Services Department of the State Government conducts skiing courses that charge less for



training, food and accommodation than it would cost to stay at home. However, normally these highly subsidised courses are meant only for students from within the state.

The fee for these courses goes up if you are over 30 or a foreigner. If you arrange your own accommodation you pay less.

Lessons in ski bobbing, too, are normally available.

### **'Sledges'**

Rural children improvise sledges out of wooden boards and used wooden crates, take them uphill and come sliding down on them.

### **Tennis**

There are tennis courts at the Club.

### **Tobogganing**

Toboggan sledges are available on hire.

### **Treks out of Gulmarg**

Please see the section on 'Gulmarg' in the chapter on 'Trekking in Kashmir' where several treks for amateurs have been suggested. From Gulmarg you can see the Nanga Parbat, the fifth highest peak in the world, which is 140 km. to the north. You can also see the majestic, snow-covered Haramukh massif. Khilanmarg is around an hour's trek away.

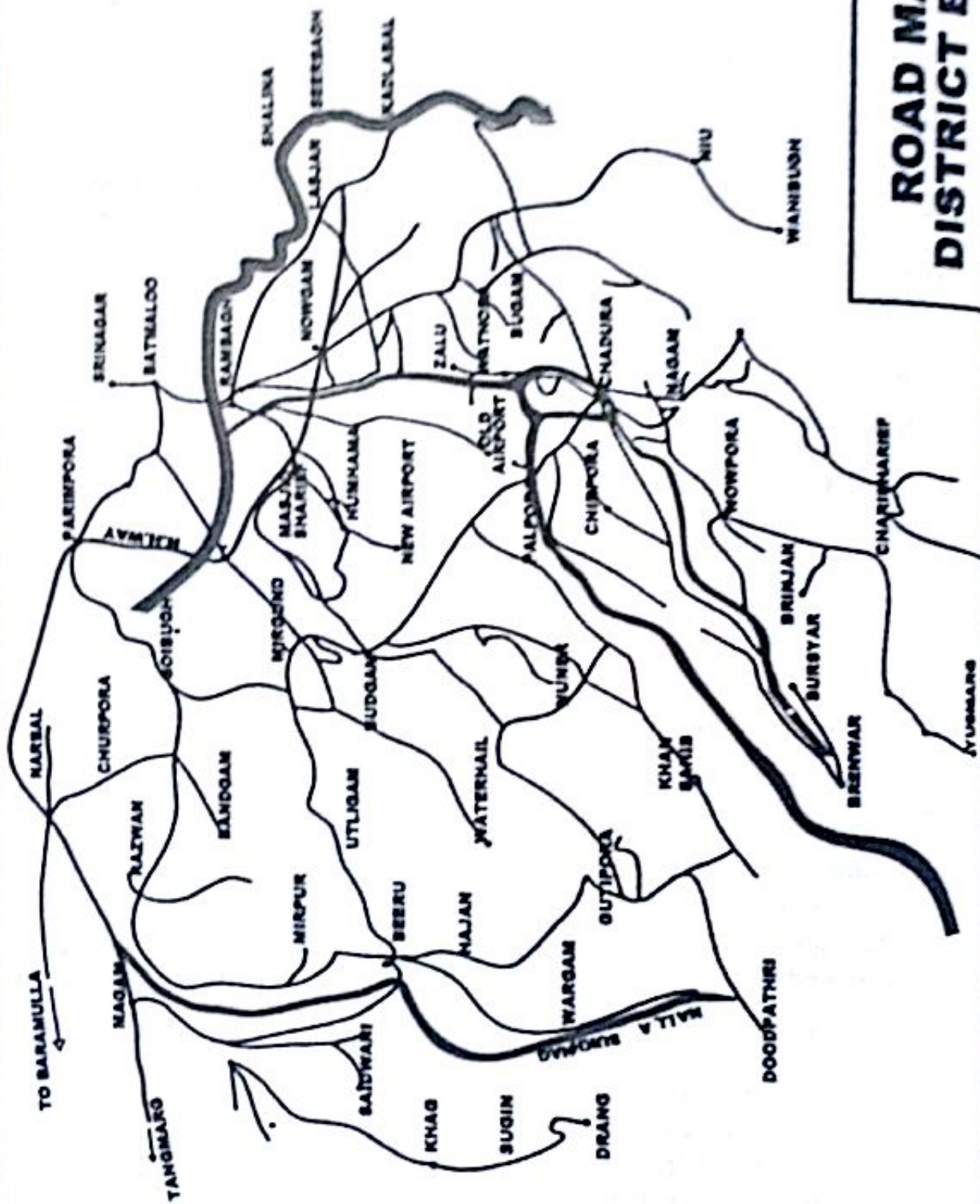
**Khilanmarg:** (4 km. from Gulmarg, c.10,000'.) This is a meadow with plenty of flowers in the summers. The nallahs (streams) generally contain snow even in summer. It would have hardened sufficiently to permit tobogganing. A few eating places function during the tourist season.

**Al Pathar:** (c.14,000') Climb up from Khilanmarg to what is simply known as the Waterfall. Then go up the steep Apharwat. You will reach the Al Pathar ridge. There is a small valley after that. It is not possible to ride ponies beyond this point because the path gets rough and is full of stones.

*The Frozen Lake:* There is a nameless lake half a kilometre ahead of Al Pathar. It is generally called the Frozen Lake. It is about 750m. long, 500m. wide and quite deep. The lake freezes over in winter, when it is possible to walk on it. Slabs of ice continue to float on it till late-May, even early June. Till the mid-1990s, there used to be around eighteen feet of snow near the lake in winter. Even in the low snowfall years of 1999-2001 there were around six to eight feet of snow.



## ROAD MAP OF DISTRICT BUDGAM.





## 8

### Budgâm

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If you reach Kashmir by air, Budgâm will be the first district that you will touch. The Srinagar airport and parts of Srinagar City are in Budgâm district. ('Bud' is pronounced like the English 'bud'; and 'gam' rhymes with 'arm'.)

Budgâm consists of a dry, dusty *karewa* (plateau), as well as lush meadows, the most famous of which is Yusmarg. It also has exciting treks. However, its principal tourist attraction is the powerful Tsrar-e-Sharief shrine. Also spelt Chrar-e-Sharief, the shrine hit international headlines in 1995, when the Pakistani mercenary Mast Gul destroyed it. (It has since been rebuilt.)

You can also travel to Budgâm by road from Srinagar. There are several buses everyday from Srinagar to Budgâm town and Tsrar-e-Sharief in particular, but also to other parts of the district. The journey from Srinagar to most parts of Budgâm mentioned below takes an hour or two if you are in a car or jeep, and a little longer by bus.

There's plenty of budget accommodation available at Tsrar-e-Shraief: run by the government, the management of the holy shrine and by private individuals. Yusmarg has a picturesque, upmarket tourist village, currently in disuse. As far as the rest of the district is concerned, tourists normally make day trips and return to Srinagar for the night. If you have your own camping equipment, you can explore all the areas around.

While you can visit the district throughout the year, most tourists prefer the warmer months (March-November).

#### The vital statistics

Budgâm (also spelt Badgam) has an area of 1,371 sq. km. Its population was estimated at 4.97 lakh (0.49 million) in 1991. It has 496 villages in addition to Budgâm town. Some 21 of these villages are uninhabited. All but four of its villages have electric connections and all but six have facilities



for piped drinking water. Only 17.86 percent of its people were literate in 1981, making it the least literate district in the state. Agricultural crops are sown on 53,400 hectares in the district, of which 31,700 hectares are irrigated. On an average the district receives 585 mm. of rainfall every year. Rice, maize and oilseeds are grown in Budgâm.

1981 census figures: Total population-3,67,262; Muslims-3,52,335; Hindus-9,652; Sikhs-5,158.

2001 census: population: 5,24, 633; literacy: 38.47% (still the lowest in the state).

## History

**Budgâm** means 'the big village' (as in the Hindi 'barha gaon'). It has produced some of Kashmir's most famous historians, including Khwaja Aazam Dedmari and Malik Haider Chadoora. Therefore, the history of the district itself has been recorded in some detail. The Khwaja writes that the region was called Deedmarbag. He adds that it was so densely populated that if a goat were to climb atop the roof of a house at the southern end of the town, it could easily reach the northern end simply by jumping from rooftop to rooftop, never touching the earth even once. Hence the name 'the big village.'

The old name of the administrative region now known as Budgâm was Deesu Pargana. During the Dogrâ period (late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) it was renamed the 'Sri Pratap Singhpor' tehsil and was part of Bârâmulâ district. Later, after independence it was merged with Srinagar district and then, in 1979, made an independent district.

The Bârâmula, Pulwâmâ and Srinagar districts surround Budgâm district in the Valley. However, almost a fifth of the district borders Poonch in the Jammû province. Therefore invaders and visitors alike have used this route to enter the Valley. Mehmood of Ghazni did so twice, in the eleventh century. On both occasions he tried, unsuccessfully, to invade Kashmir through the Poonch Gali, which is where present day Budgâm meets Poonch district in the Khag area. Then in 1814, the first attempt by Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh of the Punjab to capture Kashmir was also made through Budgâm. He, too, failed. However, the Afghan army of the Durrani clan fared far better in October 1762.

On the positive side, Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveller, too, took this route in A.D. 633 to visit Poonch. He, as well as the invaders, came through the Tosha Maidan pass.

In the Buddhist era several parts of Budgâm, especially Ishgan and Ishkota, became major centres of Buddhism.



Budgām's biggest claim to fame—and thus its most important landmark for tourists and pilgrims—has been its association with holy men in general and with Sheikh Noor-ud-Din. The Sheikh, who is also referred to as the Alamdar-e-Kashmīr, was buried at what is now the holy shrine at Chrar-e-Sharief (more correctly, Tsrar-e-Sharief). This without doubt is the most venerated shrine in rural Kashmīr and, arguably, one of the top two or three in all of Kashmīr. A whole village, Nasrullah Pora, has been named after one of the Sheikh's disciples, Bâbâ Nasir.

Beerwah is the other major historic village of the district. The Shaivite philosopher Abhinav Gupt and his disciples entered into *samadhi* in a cave in Beerwah in the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Which means that they entered the cave alive, probably sealed off its entrance and never returned.) The name Beerwah is probably derived from 'Behroop' which once was the name of the village and in turn owes its origin to the nearby Behroop spring. Equally, the name could have been derived from that of the famous Raja Beerw. Shaivite idols from whose era can still be seen.

The Afghân (Durrani) governor Badal Khân Khattak got a fortress built in Beerwah in 1760. It was repaired in 1810 on the orders of Abdullah Khân. However, the earthquake of 1884 reduced the fortress to rubble.

Chadoora is the name of both a village and an administrative sub-division of Budgām district. The correct Kashmīrī pronunciation is 'Tsodur'. The village is 16 km. south of Srinagar. The aforementioned Malik Haider was a major landlord of the Chadoora area. (See 'The History of Kashmīr' for details.) The Mughal Emperor Jehangir was quite fond of the Malik. He demonstrated his appreciation in many ways. He bestowed honours (including the very high title of Raees-ul-Mulk) and awards on the Malik. Haider also supervised the reconstruction of Kashmīr's biggest Jâmâ Masjid—the one in Srinagar—and the construction of the Verinag gardens on behalf of the Emperor.

It must surely have been the Malik's influence that made Chadoora loom so large in the Emperor's world. For instance, in the *Tuzuk-e-Jehangiri*, the Emperor has copiously praised the physical charms of Chadoora. He has also mentioned that in Chadoora there used to be a tree called the Halthal which would tremble all over and 'come into movement' if any one of its branches were pulled or tugged at. Jehangir notes that such movement 'was common to that species of tree and not confined to one tree'. Unfortunately this species is no longer extant.

Present day Chadoora once was a karewa and a favourite hunting ground of Jehangir's. The Emperor renamed it Noorabad or Noorpur after his wife, at the request of that consummate courtier and factotum, Malik Haider. However, the name did not catch on. Jehangir had the good sense to let the



old name return. The Mughals constructed several buildings including a palace and an ammunition depot, in Chadoora.

However, before the Mughals started patronising the Malik and his native Chadoora, the Chaks did so. Ali Dar, who was an advisor to King Yusuf Shah Chak and the tutor of his son Yaqub (who was the last independent king of Kashmir), was a native of the Chadoora area. The Shia (Shiite) theologian Mir Shams-ud-Din Iraqi died in Chadoora, where he was buried. (The Mir's tomb was first built by Daulat Shah Chak and later rebuilt by Malik Haider.)

## Society and Culture

### The Agas of Budg  m

Budg  m has a substantial Shia (Shiite) population. The Agas (or Aghas) are an important spiritual as well as temporal institution among the Shias almost everywhere. The Agas of Budg  m trace their ancestry to Syed Haider, a renowned doctor of the Unani system of medicine. Haider was the first of their family to settle in Budg  m. This was in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Syed Haider also became famous for the spiritual guidance he would provide the people, so famous that this led to the founding of a hereditary spiritual dynasty.

Haider's son, Aga Syed Mehdi, who went to Najaf (Iraq) for higher studies in theology, succeeded him. The institution has only grown stronger over the years. The Aga of a more recent time, Syed Yusuf Al-Mousavi wielded such influence that on his death in 1982 the people named the principal shopping centre of Budg  m after him.

The Agas, and thus their huge following, have mostly stood for moderate, nationalist politics. This irked some armed groups, who, in the year 2000, assassinated Aga Mehdi, the main Aga leader of his time. The funeral processions of these Agas are enormous. In the case of the elder Aga it was so big that it took almost four hours to walk less than two kilometres.

### The Kani shawls of Kanihama

The famous Kani (loom woven) shawls of Kashmir are made in Kanihama, a village that became a major centre of commerce during the Dogr   era. At the peak there were thirty thousand looms making this very elaborate variety of shawl. Efforts to revive the craft have been fairly successful. Apparently the art was introduced by King Zain-ul-Abedin.

### Literary figures

Apart from the major historians mentioned, Budg  m is the land of two of the most famous poets of the Kashmiri mystic (*sufiana*) tradition, Shams Fakir and Samad Mir. Abdul Ahad   z  d wrote not only revolutionary poetry



but also a history of Kashmiri literature. Ghulam Nabi Dilsoz wrote romantic poetry, while Meqi Lal Saqi is a scholar-poet. Ghulam Nabi Gowhar, an eminent judge, is also a novelist and historian.

## Important places of tourist interest

### The Yusmarg area

**Yusmarg:** (7,500' above the msl.) Yusmarg is 40 km. south of Srinagar and close to Char-e-Sharief. 'Yus' is short for 'Yousa' or 'Youza,' the Kashmiri word for 'Jesus'. 'Marg' means 'meadow.' Thus, without doubt Yusmarg means 'the meadow of Jesus,' even though there is plenty of room for debate as to who this particular Jesus was. (Jesus-or its local variant-is not a name that one comes across often-in Kashmir or anywhere else in the world, except when used for the Lord himself.)

In any case, Yusmarg is not a meadow but a series of wooded meadows amidst the Pir Panjal range. They are located in a small, open valley. It is the fifth most popular recreational resort in Kashmir, after Srinagar, Pahalgām, Gulmarg and Sonamarg. Like the three mentioned last, it is substantially higher and cooler than the state's summer capital. It also has an artificial lake (a reservoir, actually). After 1997, Yusmarg became a favoured destination for day trips, normally combined with a visit to Char-e-Sharief. Its meadows are very popular with picnickers.

The mountains around the Yusmarg valley have giant pines and firs. Paritherum is grown on their lower slopes.

Yusmarg is the base for many celebrated treks. The important destinations in the neighbourhood are mentioned in this section. For details of some of these treks, see 'Trekking in Kashmir'. The most popular day trips are to Doodganga and Nil Nag.

*Where to stay* Yusmarg has extensive tourist infrastructure (self-catering huts, a rest house etc.). However, much of this fell into disuse in the 1990s. So bring your own tents.

**Doodh-Ganga:** (lit.: The river of milk.) This stream got its name because of its milk-white waters. It is at a short distance from the meadows and picnickers often lunch on its banks. Known for its trout, the Doodh Ganga later merges with the Jehlum, of which mighty river the Doodh Ganga is a tributary.

**Mount Tatakoti:** (15,500' above the msl.) This peak is barely a kilometre from Yusmarg. On the way is the source of the trout-rich Doodh Ganga river.



**Nil Nâg:** (pron.: neel Nag; lit.: 'the blue spring') This is an oval, blue water lake in a hollow on the hill slopes of Gogji Pathar village. It is a four km. downhill trek from Yusmarg through thick forests, or a picturesque 13 km. uphill drive from Nowgam, or 6 km. west of Tsrar/Chrar-e-Sharief. It is about 100 metres long, 18 metres wide and 12 metres deep. It is on the other (northern) side of the hill from Yusmarg.

The waters of the lake are warm. The Hindus consider it holy. Apparently, even in pre-historic times-in the days of the *Purân* scriptures-the Kashmiris would retreat to the warmer plains (of Jammû province) in winter, 'leaving Kashmir to the demons'. The old would sometimes get left behind. This is what happened to an elderly Brâhmin, who had to seek refuge in the warmth of a cave. There, demons caught hold of him, took him to a lake called the Nil Nag and threw him in. (The Veri Nag of Ânañnâg district, too, is known as Nil Nag. However, most people believe that the scriptures refer to the Nil Nag of Budgâm.)

At the bottom of the lake the Brâhmin found a palace. It belonged to King Nil Nag, son of Kashyap Rishi, the saint after whom Kashmir probably takes its name. Nil Nag, who was the king of the snakes, was sitting on his throne. (Nag not only means 'spring' but also 'king cobra'.) The Brâhmin told Nil Nag his tale of woe.

The serpent king pulled out and gave him a copy-presumably waterproof-of the *Neelmat Puran*, the oldest extant book written in Kashmir<sup>1</sup>. He advised the Brâhmin to act at all times as advised in the book and make offerings as directed, if he wanted the demons to stop bothering him. The Brâhmin not only did so himself, he also spread the good word among his people who stopped migrating (to Jammû) for the winters for many centuries after that. In turn, the demons stopped bothering them. (The demons must have resumed their act towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century because some, and by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century many, Kashmiris started going south for their winters once again.)

The local Muslims, too, hold the lake in mystic awe. The 16<sup>th</sup> century Mughal historian Abul Fazl, after praising the lake's 'exquisitely clear waters', wrote, 'Many perish by fire about its border. Strange to relate, omens are taken by its means. A nut is divided into four parts and thrown in. If an odd number floats, the augury is favourable. If otherwise, the reverse.'

The banks of the lake are precipitous. There is a Forest Rest House nearby.

1 The 'Cultural Academy' of the Government of Jammû and Kashmir has published an extremely inexpensive, 2-volume English translation, by Dr. Ved Kumari, of this 7th century AD Sanskrit classic.



**Sang-e-Safed:** Sang, pron. 'sung', means 'stone', while safed means 'white'. Together the name means 'the white stones (or rocks)'. This is an oval meadow 10 km. uphill from Yusmarg, on the way to Mount Tutakoti. The Doodh Ganga passes through it.

Nearby meadows include the **Liddermar**, which is a fine camping ground, and **Haigin**, which is a meadow amidst pines, 4 km. from Yusmarg.

### Khag and its neighbourhood

The **Khag** 'block' (major cluster of villages) is renowned for its physical beauty.

**Khag:** This is a fairly large mountainous region within Budgâm district, still unknown to most tourists and still thickly wooded. Its accessible areas start around eight thousand feet above the mean sea level and go up to around fourteen thousand feet. There are mountains, with a mean elevation of around 17,000', around the meadows. The nomadic Bakerwâl shepherds and their flocks spend their summers in these mountains. While they are there, these tribals, with their colourful camps and haunting evensong, add to the allure of Khag.

**Tos(h)a Maidan:** (10,500 feet above the msl.) 'Maidan' refers to any large level field, pasture or even playground. Tosa/Tosha could possibly have been derived from the name of a very expensive and soft woollen shawl. So, could the name of this large pasture refer the soft, downy quality of its grass?

This is the largest meadow in the region, being almost 5 km. long and three kilometres wide. A dense forest of very tall deodar trees surrounds it. While I have not been there in winter I have come across references to the quality of its grass, which remains green even in the winters. Its wild flowers are known for their fragrance. In the summers the maidan – especially its lower portion, the Wattadar – plays host to the cowherd Gujjar tribals as well as the Bakerwâls. The Gujjars bring their cattle along to graze.

There are countless streams between the ridges in the vicinity. This maidan in the Himâlayan range is 10 km. from Khag and 16 km. south east of Gulmarg. To get to it one has to go past the Drang and Zagokhora villages. The maidan is 5 km. from Drang and the ascent is steep.

It is located on the Mughal route and the Mughals would cross over from Poonch (in Jammû province) to the maidan through the Basmai Gali pass (13,000'), from which the Nil Nag, too, can be approached. The Basmai is the pass closest to the plains of (West) Punjab (now in Pakistan). This also represents the most direct route between Srinagar and Poonch. (The pass remains closed from mid-or late October till some time in June.)



The Mughals are believed to have constructed a seven-storey palace, the Kachehry Dam Dam, at the maidan. It is on a hillock, from which a path leads down to Tsal. The other ruined tower, hexagonal in shape and about 25 feet high, is named after Sardar Attar Muhammad Khân.

### Pehjan

**Pehjan proper:** From this high altitude pasture one can see the Wular lake on one side and one of the world's highest peaks, the Nanga Parbat (26,696'), on the other. To get to Pehjan you have to go past the sloping pastures of Donwar, Brari Pather and Yanga Pather. The meadow abounds in *saussurea lappa* (locally known as kuth) and several types of asters.

Beyond Pehjan are the pastures of Parhan, known as Rachi Parhan.

**Nakwaer Pal:** (14,000') (lit.: the 'nostrile' rock) The tallest peak in the range, the rocky Nakwaer Pal is on the route to Pehjan. Legend has it that when all of Kashmir was a lake called the *Sati Sar*, a particularly celebrated rock at *Nakwaer Pal* was where boats would be anchored. The presence of an iron hook, variously called the *Ded Bal* and the *Lal Khânen Ghar*, embedded in the rock, buttresses the legend. Shepherds and cowherds from the neighbouring villages come here to graze their flock. (see the chapter on 'Bârâmulâ' for details on the *Sati Sar*)

### Streams and Springs

Budgâm is dotted with springs. There are thirty perennial, round-the-year fresh water springs in the Khag region alone, with another twenty coming to life in the summers. Because of this a nameless employee of the Jammû & Kashmir government's Information Department once wrote that Khag should be called the 'land of springs'.

The better known *nags* (springs) are:

**Gandhak Nag:** The sulphurous waters of this spring are believed to have medicinal and curative properties, especially for those with skin diseases. (Gandak means 'sulphur'.) The spring is located in Darang Khaiporâ, a village in the Khag administrative 'block'.

**Nârâ Nâg:** Also known as Narain Nag, this spring is located near Khag village. It is said to get its waters from the Toshamaidan Sar Lake. The waters of the Sar seep into the ground to re-emerge downhill as the Nârâ Nâg. In support of this plausible theory is the legend of a mendicant who accidentally dropped some sheep-dung into the Toshamaidan Sar Lake. He found it floating on the Nârâ Nâg when he reached the Nag a few days later. To be sure that there was indeed an underground link between the Sar and the Nag, he went back to the Sar and threw turmeric powder into it. After a few days the turmeric-coloured waters reached the Nag and proved the mendicant's theory right.



**Pushkar Nag:** The ancient Kashmîrî Hindu scripture, the *Neelmat Puran*, contains the oldest extant mention of this spring, which originates in Pushkar village, which is between Khag and Ferozpura. The Puran says that bathing in the spring carries as much spiritual merit as reading the Vedas (the oldest of all Hindu scriptures) all night long. The Nag flows eastward. The Kashmîrî Pandits would perform the Divai Path in the month of Savan (July-Aug) every year and then bathe in the spring.

**Sukh Nag:** This perennial spring flows from the several small lakes between the Toshamaidan and Nurpur passes, on the east of the Panjal range. It cascades down the mountains and pours off a 20' cliff at Kanj Zubji, near the Toshamaidan, as a waterfall. It is then joined by other springs, in particular the Magam stream at village Bailheran and the Khor stream at Trekolabal. They merge to become the Ahij brook.

The Ahij then branches into several streams such as the Mala Kol, the Lar Kol and the Sona Maen Kol, which irrigate the Beerwah area.

Vigne observed that the Suk(h) Nag, like many other rivers of the Valley is considered pre-eminently good on account of its freshness and power of creating an appetite. He added that the hono(u)r of having filled the drinking-pipe of the old kings of Kashmîr is claimed for this stream.

**Sut Haran:** The name is probably a corruption of the Hindi/ Sanskrit expression 'Sita Haran' (lit.:the abduction of Sita). However, the local legend does not refer to the abduction of Goddess Sita. Instead, it is about her having bathed in this spring at some stage during the 14-year exile (*banvâs*) of Lord Ram. It is said that Shri Ram camped in these woods, accompanied by his wife, Sita, and brother, Lakshman. Near the spring there is a rock which the goddess is supposed to have sat on.

This spring, known for the sweetness of its water, is located in a dense forest. It is close to the Toshamaidan meadow on one side and the 'Line of Control' on the other. The Tos(h)amaidan Sar lake found in the middle of the Toshamaidan meadow originates at this spring.

**Streams.** Sometimes several springs combine to form a stream. And at others a single spring, the Sukh Nag for example, gives birth to as many as three streams-in this case the Ahij, the Laen and the Sona Maen. The Ahij and the Mala Kol are examples of the former type, for the two merge with the Jehlum.

The streams of Budgâm have full-fledged identities of their own, in legend as well as in observable reality. The silent Mala Kol was nicknamed the 'deaf-mute stream' because it noiselessly followed the sage Syed Taj-ud-Din from the Sukh Nag to Sikandarporâ when he visited the Khag area. The reticence of its character is most noticeable when it is in spate. Conversely, the Laen Kol is the noisy one, kicking up a ruckus even when



its waters are low. The Laen, Maen and Zaen are seen by the locals as being three sisters.

Other major streams of the district are the Shaliganga Nallah and the Ferozpor   Nallah.

## Shrines

### Chrar-e-Sharief

(Correctly Tsrar-e-Sharief; 28 km. south-west of Srinagar on the road to Yusmarg.) The tomb of **Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Rishi** at Tsrar-e-Sharief is, without doubt, the most popular, the most revered Kashmiri Muslim shrine in the Valley. Hindus and Muslims alike accept him as the patron saint of Kashmir.

There is a mosque next to the shrine. It was first built by Sangram Dar, a disciple of the Sheikh. Sangram was the owner of the land on which both the shrine and the mosque now stand. Every Friday afternoon the Sheikh, also known as the Alamdar (flag-bearer) of Kashmir, would offer prayers at this mosque.

There are many legends about the Sheikh-ul-Alam's out of body experiences, powers that are said to have continued after his death as well. The Sheikh died, in 1438, at some distance from the mosque. So his body, wrapped in a shroud, flew to an open space next to the mosque, where he was subsequently buried. (The other graves in the shrine are those of the Sheikh's disciples, including the renowned Bab   Nasr-ud-Din.)

King Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-70), better known as Budshah, came over from Srinagar to attend the Sheikh's funeral. He got a shrine built over the grave. Being made of wood, the Charar-e-Sharief shrine, like almost all major Kashmiri Muslim shrines, got burnt several times over the centuries. Its oldest recorded gutting was in the 1580s, following which Yaqoob Chak, the last independent king of Kashmir, got it repaired. That a king who happened to be Shia got repaired a shrine dedicated to a Sunni saint is further proof that sectarian histories are wrong.

Then in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century almost the entire town got burnt. Ata Muhammad Kh  n, the Afgh  n governor of Kashmir, got the shrine reconstructed. (He made major additions to the adjoining mosque.) The Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, got several cosmetic changes effected around the shrine in the 1950s.

In the winter of 1994-95 some Pakistani mercenaries, led by one Mast Gul, a Pakistani national, came over to Kashmir and set up camp inside the holy shrine of Charar-e-Sharief, confident that the Government of India would not be so insensitive as to send the Army or even the police inside a house of worship. They were right in their assessment.



The Indian Army surrounded the shrine instead. The siege lasted several weeks in the summer of 1995, at the end of which Mast Gul and party simply set the wooden shrine on fire. The government sent in fire tenders. Mast Gul climbed onto the empty tank of one of these fire engines after all its water had been squirted out, and escaped.

The government began work on the construction of the present shrine in 1997. It is quite different from its precursor which 'was a large oblong building with a wing at either end. The plinth [was] of brick masonry and the upper structure [was] of hewn logs placed transversely, log on log. The roof [rose] in tiers and [was] supported on pillars.' (Bakaya) (On the front and back covers of this book is a side-view of the shrine as it was till 1995. In a tiny inset on the spine is a front-view.

The present building is grand and allows plenty of sunshine in. The shingles on the roof above the tomb inside are exquisite. The architecture is mainly modern western with some Kashmīrī influences.

### Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Rishi/Wali

Also known as Nund Rishi, the Sheikh-ul-Ālam is arguably the most respected Muslim saint of Kashmīrī origin. He was born on the occasion of Eid-ul-Zuha in A.D. 1377 in Kaimoh (once known as Katimusha), near Bijbehara, in the Kulgam area. His parents were Sheikh Salar-ud-Din and Sadra Moji. (The tombs of his mother Sadra, son Haidar, daughter Zoon Ded and wife Zai Ded are all at Kaimoh, where his father's turban is still on display. It is a large, major shrine, made of mediaeval bricks. Sadra Moji was born a Hindu Rajput and was a widow with two children at the time of her marriage with Sheikh Salar. Yasman Rishi had converted her to Islām.)

This 14<sup>th</sup> century seer is also considered the founder of the 'rishi' order. (See also the section on 'The Rishis' in the chapter on 'Islām in Kashmīr') The Sheikh was a second generation Muslim. His father, who was from the royal family of Kishtwār (in Doda district), converted to Islām under the influence of either the eminent seer Syed Hussain Simnani or Yasman Rishi.

Sheikh Noor-ud-Din was inspired by the teachings of Lal Ded (aka Lalla Arifa), on whose milk he is said to have been reared. (He refused to drink his own mother's milk as a baby.) The Sheikh took to religion at a very early age, observing the austerities of Islām and walking from one end of Kashmir to the other to disseminate its teachings. He entered a still-extant, 10-foot deep, cave near Kaimoh and meditated there for twelve years. Such acts won him an enormous following during his own lifetime.

This following was (and remains) totally non-partisan. It consisted of Muslims as well as Hindus, royalty as well as the poor, Sunnis as well as Shias. All Kashmīrī kings vied to be a part of the Sheikh's legacy. Even



rulers from outside, like the Afghân Governor Ata Muhammad Khân, were not immune. Four centuries after the Sheikh's death Ata struck coins in his name.

Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom would always walk barefoot to Chrar-e-Sharief: the ultimate mark of humility in a devotee and of respect for the master. (The shrine of Makhdoom Sâheb, the great 16<sup>th</sup> century divine, has almost the same status in Srinagar City as Sheikh Noor-ud-Din's does in rural Kashmir.)

The Sheikh was a prolific poet and one of the three major pillars of the first phase of Kashmiri poetry. (Shiti Kantha and Lal Ded were the other two.) His sayings are didactic in nature and were collected, two centuries after his death, by Bâbâ Naseeb-ud-Din Ghazi, in the *Nur Nama*.

According to a publication of the Government of J&K, the 'Sheikh's poetry, commonly believed to be the Quran in Kashmiri verse, is popular among the locals. His poetry revolves round [sic] the oneness of God, [the] temporary status of the world and underscor[es] the importance of good deeds.'

*Annual urs*: The Sheikh died on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of Ramzân. According to the Kashmiri calender this happened in the month of Poh (December). Therefore, his *urs* is observed in Poh and is one of the most popular *urses* of Kashmir.

### Other Shrines

**The Budgâm Imâmbârâ** : Aga Syed Mehdi was, as mentioned above, a major spiritual leader of the Shias (Shiites) around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He used to pray under a Chinâr. On his death another famous Shia guide, Aga Syed Mohammad, got the present Imâmbârâ constructed, in 1857, near the Chinâr. Its interiors were designed by Asghar Ali of nearby Mirgund. The exteriors are Indo-Iranian. The Imâmbârâ was enlarged in 1924 on the orders of Aga Syed Sâheb and panels of *papier mache*, a French craft that has struck roots among the Shias of Iran and Budgâm, were added. In 1955, Aga Syed Yusuf Al Mousavi Al Safvi got the Imâmbârâ augmented further through the Anjuman-e-Shari Shian organisation. He also got a mosque constructed next door.

Today, the Imâmbârâ is octagonal and has five grand doors, each twelve feet wide. Of these, one door is earmarked exclusively for women.

**Hamchaporâ-the Alamdar-e-Kashmîr ziarat**: The Alamdar of Kashmir, Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali/ Rishi, travelled extensively through the land, to meditate but also to spread his message. On entering the Khag region he chose a rock to meditate on, and left his footprints on it. The rock came to be called Shah Kean (the king of stones). A lady spiritualist, Sham Ded,



sought the Sheikh out at Poshkar for religious instruction, which she received and helped her become one of the major saints of Kashmir. The present *ziarat* (shrine) marks the place where the Sheikh-ul-Alam lived during his longish stay in Hamchaporâ.

**Kanihama—Hazrat Syed Zia-ud-Din Bukhari's tomb:** One of the major events in the history of Kashmir is the migration of 360 Syeds from Bukhara (Central Asia), following their persecution there. Syed Zia-ud-Din chose Kanihama for his mission. Of the many miracles associated with him the best known is about a blind girl whom he asked to bring a *kangri*. (A *kangri* is a pot made of clay, enclosed in a cane basket, in which embers are kept smouldering. The *kangri* is kept close to the body in the winters, much like a hot water bottle.) The girl told him that she could not do so because she was blind. So, the Syed put his hand on her eyes and she began to see. The Syed died in Kanihama. His annual *urs* is on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Rajab of the Hijri calendar.

**Khân Sâheb—Hazrat Saleh's shrine:** This shrine is located in the administrative 'block' called Khân Sâheb, after the shrine. Hazrat Syed Saleh Khân, the saint of the shrine, was born in Pakhla (in present day Pakistan) in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There were omens and signs at the time which indicated to those who could interpret such things that a major saint had been born. As many as 99 saints went to the house of Khân Sâheb's father, Ismail Sâheb, to see Saleh the day that he was born.

An uncle wanted to adopt Saleh when he was five. When his requests failed to move Ismail Sâheb, he started resorting to pressure. Things were getting unpleasant, so Ismail Sâheb packed his bags and migrated to Kashmir, along with his son. En route they met the renowned Central Asian saint, Bu Ali.

In Kashmir they sought out Bâbâ Naseer-ud-Din Ghazi, the leading seer of the age, who let them stay with him. Ismail left after a year, but Saleh Sâheb remained with the Bâbâ for the next twelve years. Then for another twelve years Saleh Sâheb meditated in a cave, which is still associated with him and is called Khân Sâheb. It was during this phase that legends about his spiritual powers began to spread. He acquired a huge following, which would flock to his cave. For a while he shifted to Srinagar, before moving to the woods to pray and meditate.

Khân Sâheb was an outstanding calligrapher. A copy of the Holy Quran copied by him is still extant and is to be found in the Watal Kadal area of Srinagar. The Syed died on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Zeeqad, in the 1019<sup>th</sup> year of the Islâmic calendar. The annual *urs* of Khân Sâheb is, therefore, held in the month of Zeeqad at his tomb.



**Lassaporâ—Syed Mohammad Samri's shrine:** The Syed belonged to Shopian, and lived perhaps in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century. He went to meditate in the forests of Lassaporâ, seven kilometres from Habir, a village in Khag. After some years of such meditation, he died and was buried there. His annual *urs* is celebrated on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of Phagun (roughly, the 3<sup>rd</sup> March).

**Palaporâ (Poshkar)—Hazrat Ganga Bâbâ Rishi's shrine:** The rishi migrated from Mârâz to Palaporâ (3 km. from Khag). During his lifetime he got 360 mosques built. He also got an equal number of culverts constructed over streams in the Khag area. In the tradition of that great environmentalist, Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Rishi, Ganga Bâbâ too got thousands of trees planted. At least one of these trees, a poplar, went on to acquire a diameter of 12 metres (40 feet).

**Poshkar—Bâbâ Latif-ud-Din Qazi's tomb:** Born Ludo (or Ladi) Raina in Kishtwâr, the Bâbâ came over to Kashmir looking for a job, a spiritual guide and a cure for some disease that he was suffering from. In the Sheikh-ul-Alam he found all three, during the Alamdar's stay in Poshkar. The Sheikh agreed to take Ludo Raina as his disciple and Raina became Hazrat Bâbâ Latif-ud-Din Qazi. He followed his mentor's method of meditating on the one hand and serving his fellow men (i.e., performing what we now call 'social service') on the other.

The Sheikh also taught the Bâbâ how to meditate in a cave. So, the Qazi left Poshkar, never to return. He spent many years, and died, in a cave quite far from Poshkar. The cave and the meadow around it have since been known as Bâbâ Marg (the meadow of the Bâbâ).

The Bâbâ's distraught disciples were unable to reach the then inaccessible cave to collect his body for burial. In death as in life the Bâbâ followed his guide. The Bâbâ's body, wrapped in a shroud, flew from the cave to Poshkar to land where the tomb now is. The Bâbâ's annual *urs* is celebrated on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Phagun (roughly, the 26<sup>th</sup> February) every year. On the occasion the Bâbâ's sword and some other relics associated with him are displayed.

**Poshkar—Sham Ded's tomb:** Sham Ded died and was buried in her own village, where her father had been a blacksmith. 'Ded' (pron.: d-yed) means 'sister' (as in the Hindi 'didi'). 'Sham' means 'the evening'. The saint got her moniker because when her spiritual guide, the Sheikh-ul-Alam, died, it was she who carried the news to Bâbâ Latif-ud-Din Qazi and it was evening when she did so.

**Poshkar—the place:** (8,837 feet) Vigne called this wooded hill on the western edge of Kashmir 'the highest of all the isolated hills within the [V]alley'. Like the village of the same name, it is located between Khag and Firozpur.



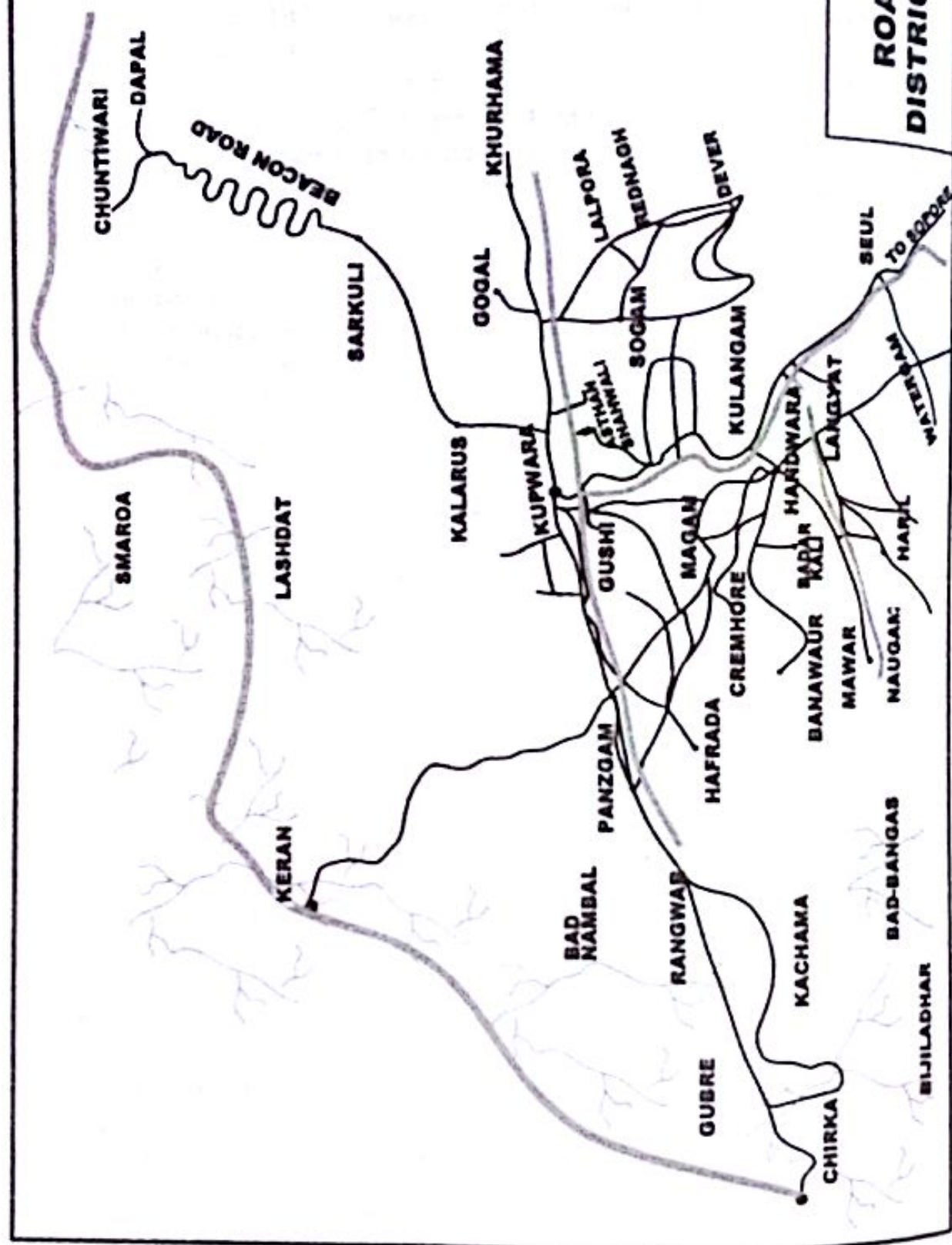
**Sikandarporâ—the tombs of the Syeds Taj-ud-Din and Alla-ud-Din:** Syed Taj-ud-Din first went to Sukh Nag to pursue his spiritual mission. After a longish stay there he went from village to village with the goal of reaching Sikandarporâ. Legend has it that the Mala Kol stream followed him silently as he travelled from Sukh Nag to Sikandarporâ, where he settled down and, later, died. His son Syed Alla-ud-Din proved a worthy successor. The tombs of both are in Sikandarporâ.

### **Forests**

More than half of the district consists of forests (750 sq. km. out of a total of 1,371 sq. km.). These are divided into three forest ranges, Doodh Ganga, Raithan and Sri Pratap Pora.



# ROAD MAP OF DISTRICT KUPWARA





# 9

## Kupwârâ

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### The vital statistics

Kupwârâ district is spread over an area of 2,379 sq. km., of which 1,500 sq. km. are under forests. Its population was estimated at 4.44 lakh (0.4 million) in 1991. 1981 census figures: Total population: 3,28,643; Muslims-3,20,629; Hindus-6,647; Sikhs-1,448. At 18.82%, literacy was low in 1981. Female literacy was a mere 4.88%, while men were slightly better off at 27.67%. 2001 census: Population—6,35,354; literacy: 40.27%

The district has 369 inhabited villages, of which 348 have electricity, 359 receive piped drinking water and 256 are linked with roads. The district is almost entirely (96%) rural. It has only two towns, Hañdwârâ and Kupwârâ proper, which, together, have a population of around 15,000. Even its third tehsil headquarter, Karnâh, does not qualify as a town. The district is quite sparsely populated, with just 131 people to a square kilometre. However, the population is growing rather fast (28% between 1971 and 1981). Muslims account for 98% of population of the district. Of the Muslims, 14% are tribals.

Crops are grown on 45,400 hectares, of which 23,100 ha. are irrigated.

### Geography

Kupwârâ town is some 90 km. from Srinagar, at the north western extremity of the Valley, and is 5,300' above the sea level. The western, northern and eastern parts of the district are plain (not hilly). In the north and west is Muzaffarâbâd, a district, currently under the illegal occupation of Pakistan. Bâramullâ district is in the south and east. Till July 1979, all of Kupwârâ district was a part of Bâramullâ.

The main river of the district is the Kishanganga. It flows through the district from east to west, passing through Keran-Titwal before going on to Domel in Muzaffarâbâd, where it joins River Jehlum.



The major streams of the district are the Kahmal Nallah in the Chowkibal area, the Batamaji Nallah of Karnâh, the Mawar Nallah of Mawar and the Lolab Nallah of the Lolab valley. These streams all go on to join the Pohri Nallah, which later merges with River Jehlum at Doabgah in the Sopore area of Bâramullâ.

The Kishanganga valley is separated from the Kashmir valley by a stunning, wooded Himalayan spur which goes west from the dZoji La pass to Kazinag. The traditional way to cross this spur is through the high altitude Rajdhani pass, which is close to the Srinagar-Gilgit route and which also connects Bandipore with the Guréz area. Other passes on this spur include the Tutmar Gali, the Nastachun Gali, the Farkyan Gali and the Jar Gali. The last mentioned connects the Leepa valley (in the area occupied by Pakistan), Karnâh, Keran and Machil with Kupwârâ proper.

Keran, Karnâh and Machil are all on the LoC. All passes leading to them get blocked by snow for around five months every winter, cutting them off from the rest of the state. However, the climate in most parts of Kupwârâ is much like that in the Srinagar area.

### Flora

Sixty-two percent of the district consists of forests. Trees that grow in the district include the deodar, kail, pine, fir, blue fir, elm, Chinâr, poplar, willow and walnut. Some of the important medicinal herbs found in these forests are the rattan jog, kutth, memaikh, booja khaupittries and gugal dhoop. (See also the entry on 'Bungus' later in this chapter.)

### Fauna

With forests of the kind Kupwârâ has, animals, including birds, naturally abound. Among the four legged kind are wild bulls and wild goats, 'red' and black bears, markhore, jackals, the musk deer, monkeys, leopards and foxes. And then there are doves, fly-catchers, wild cocks, woodpeckers, falcons, swallows and wild ducks, in addition to the usual crows, sparrows, pigeons and vultures. (See also the entry on 'Bungus'.)

### Shrines and Temples

Among Kupwârâ's better known shrines and temples are:

The Muqâm-e-Shah Wali Mazâr-e-Sharief of Zati Shah in Muqâm (also Mugam) village near Drugmulla. This shrine is 4 km. to the south-east of Kupwârâ proper. Its three-day annual *urs* is observed in May.

Bâbâ Abdullah Gazi was a disciple of Bâbâ Naseer-ud-din Gazi. His ziarat is in Kralporâ Guzrail, which is some 20 km. north-west of Kupwârâ town.



The shrine of Parkash Akhoon is in **Gurhi**, 3 km. from Kupwârâ proper. Also known as Parkash Pandit, this *akhoon* (teacher) earned the respect and affection of his fellow men because of his inspired-teaching of Islâmic texts. Apart from Arabic and Persian, he was proficient in Sanskrit as well. (As for the name 'Pandit,' the formula is best summed up in the words of my senior colleague, Mr. Mehmood-ur-Rehman, 'In Kashmir if you find someone with the surname Pandit, he is bound to be a Muslim, and if a person has the surname Mulla [or, for that matter, Wali-PD] he will invariably be a Hindu.')

The *ziarat* of Mîr Muhammad Ibrahim is in the Lolab valley, in a village called **Kanthporâ**.

The **Kheer Bhawânî** Asthapan: Though not as well known as its namesake in Tulamula, this temple, just a kilometre away from Kupwârâ town, in a village called Tikker, on the Chowkibal road, has a well attended annual fair in April-May.

The **Badri Kali** Asthapan is a temple dedicated to Goddess Kali and has been built atop a hillock surrounded by a forest. It is 14 km. from Hañdwârâ town on the Hañdwârâ-Wadiporâ road. Its annual fair is held in September.

### Springs and Streams

As with many other parts of Kashmir, some of the best attractions of Kupwârâ are its springs and streams.

The Qazinag spring is located in the Qazinag mountain range. It drains the southern part of the Karnâh valley. Between Chamkot and Chittarkot it is joined by the Shamshabari, in a deep ravine. It becomes more than 15m. wide by the time it reaches Titwal, where it merges with the Kishanganga.

Lalporâ is the main village of the Lolab valley. The Lol Nag stream flows through it.

Other famous springs are the Trehgam Nag of Trehgam town; the Ghazi Nag of Kralporâ Guzrail; the Zati Shah Nag which flows near the Muqâm-e-Shah Wali (Drugmulla); the Shuma Nag of Shumnag Trehgam, and the Mîr Nag of Haihama Kupwârâ.

### Mountains, Peaks, Passes

The Shamshabari range of high rocky mountains forms the eastern boundary of the Karnâh valley, between the Nattishannar and Tutmari passes (*galis*).

The Harwan pass connects the Lolab valley with Bandiporâ. The hills at this point contain a small quantity of iron, which is of a low grade.

Other major peaks, passes and ranges in the district are the Kazinag mountain range, the caves of Raja Ram, the Asmala slope, the Tumar pass (which links Nogam with the Leepa valley in POK), the Nastachun pass



(which links the Karnâh area with Chowkibal), the Lasha Dutt pass (which connects the Sharda valley with Shalbhattoo), the Jar Pass (which links the Machil region with the Lolab valley) and the Kukwa pass (which leads from Karnâh to the Taya Rangwar pastures).

### Important places of tourist interest

All of Kupwârâ is beautiful. The drive to Kupwârâ town is very enjoyable because the forests are mostly intact and the road is almost straight (linear) and very well maintained.

### Bungus

(34°22'N, 74°5'E; around 10,000' above the msl.) Bungus (or Bangas) is a valley that is 20 km. long and 15 km. wide. It is between 115 and 150 km. northwest of Srinagar, depending on the route you take. Bungus is surrounded by the tall Shamshabari range. This substantial valley looks somewhat like an irregular circle.

The Bungus stream, which is one of the headwaters of the Kamil river, originates here. The large pasturelands of Bungus produce some of the finest grass in the state. The Gujjars bring their cattle over to graze on it. Indeed, it is believed that it were the nomadic Gujjars and Bakerwâls who discovered this valley.

*Geography:* Bungus has an area of around 125 sq. km. Chowkibal and the Karnâh Gali are in the north. The Leepa Mountains are to the south of Bungus. On its east are Rajwar and Mawer. The Shamshabari and Daejlungun mountains are in the west.

*How to get there:* Bungus can be reached either from Hañdwârâ, through Satkoji or from Chowkibal, through Malasari.

*The name:* The word 'ban' or 'van' (rhymes with the English 'bun') means 'forest' in Sanskrit. 'Gas' (rhymes with 'fuss') or 'ghâs' means grass. So, Bungus (or Bangus, pron. bung-uss) means 'the forest where grass grows' or 'forests and grass.'

*Meadows—cushioned and nutritious:* True to the 'gus' part of its name, Bungus has more than a hundred meadows. A little more than half of these are on top of plateaux, while the rest are in the plains. These meadows are known all over Kashmir for their cushioned feel. (Damsna in Kargil [Ladâkh] has a similar exalted reputation.) The texture and quantity of the grass determines the cushion. Cowherds and shepherds take their flocks to these meadows because of their unique nutritional and medicinal qualities. Indeed, as we shall see below, several medicinal plants grow in the meadows of Bungus.



*Springs and streams:* The Qazinâg spring is said to be the source of the various springs and streams of Bungus. The *Doudh Kol* is seven kilometres long and its waters are sweet and cold. It emerges from the Dudi hill and merges with the Tilwan Kol at the Baddi Behek meadow. The *Roshan Kol* is a picturesque seasonal stream that cuts through Budda Bungus, which is one of the more important meadows in the plains. It joins the Tilwan Kol at Gud Bari. The *Satkol Nâg* comes out of the Satkol hill. It gives birth to another seven streams before flowing into the Leepa valley. The *Tilwan Kol* is the longest (15 km.), widest, deepest and best-known stream in all Bungus. It unites with the Kahmill stream near the Baddi Behek pasture.

*Glaciers:* There are major glaciers at Shamshabari and Daejlungun.

*Climate:* Bungus is considerably colder than, say, Srinagar City and only slightly less so than Leh. Winter temperatures remain below zero degrees (Celsius) during the day as well as the night. In summer, night temperatures are between 5 and 8 degrees (again Celsius) and the maximum around 25 degrees.

Winters are gloomy and mostly overcast. Shafi Majrooh (Rajpoori) writes, 'Severe thunderstorms are frequent [between] February [and] mid-May. A few thunderstorms are accompanied by hail and heavy rains (believed to be Mediterranean winds). Fog is very common [from the] middle [of] October to April.' He adds that the 'average annual rainfall [is around] 30 inches per annum and average snowfall [around] 10 feet.'

*Best season to visit:* May to early October.

*Natural resources:* Shafi Majrooh (Rajpoori) points out that 'Bungus is rich in oriental as well as European type[s] of flora and fauna.' It is on Mr. Majrooh's authority that the flora and fauna of Bungus have been listed below:

### *Fauna*

Bungus has around 50 species of mammals and plays host to some 200 species of birds.

The higher chordates found in Bungus include antelopes, black bears, brown bears, the red fox, monkeys, the musk deer, snow leopards, and, Mr. Majrooh adds, lions (*feliu padres*).

*The Rodents of Bungus:* Hedgehogs, the mongoose, rats, shrews and squirrels.

*Resident birds:* Pheasants, the tragophan, the monal pheasant, the Indian black partridge, wild fowls and the jungle bush quail.

*Migratory birds:* Doves, hoopoes, parrots (spectacular) and swallow golden orates.



*Non-chordates:* Mr. Majrooh says that these include several species of protozoa (free living as well as parasitic), coelenterate, mollusc and anthropod. There are no echinodermates in Bungus. Earthworms are the dominant specie of annelid.

*Anthropods:* Bees, bugs, flies, mosquitoes, pediculus species and scorpions.

*Reptiles:* Mainly lizards (calottes) and snakes (mostly non-poisonous). On occasion poisonous snakes, too, have been found, mainly the pit viper and the rustles viper.

*Fresh water fish:* Mainly schizothrox.

*Hunting:* This is now prohibited. However, before the ban people used to hunt the markhor (capra falconeri), the musk deer, jackals, tigers and snow leopards.

### Flora

The word Bungus itself ('forests and grass') hints at extremely rich vegetation. Mr. Majrooh has classified the flora of Bungus according to its use.

*Aromatic plants and incenses:* Jurinea macrocephala (gogal dhupa), saussurea lappa (kuth) and salix capra (bed-i-mushk).

*Condiments:* Artemesia vestila (buna zeur), daucus carota (bera mujhar), Joeniculum vulgare (jungli bediyan), mentha arvensis (pudina), alium cepa (wana pran) and jhymus serphyllum (javend).

*Drugs (as in hallucinogenic):* Artemesia brevifolia (tehthwan), aconitum heterophyllum (patrees) and cannabis sativa (bhang).

*Fibres (for mats, roof thatching etc.):* Betula utilis (burza), celtis australis (bremy), parrotia jacquimontiana (poh), salix sp. (willow), ulmus wallichiana (bren).

*Firewood:* Bergia ammannoides (pahand), crataegus oxyacantha (rung), cedrus deodara (deodar) and picea soimthiana (kachkul).

*Fodder:* Adinatum capillus veneris (gew theear) and several other varieties.

*Fruits:* Strawberry, juglans regia (doon), podophyllum emodi (bun wangan), solanum nigrum (kamby) and vitisveniferal (duch).

*Medicinal plants:* Macrotima benthami (gaw zaban), saussurea sacra (jugi padshah) and aconitum heterophyllum (patrees).

*Poisons:* Aconitum nepllus (mohund gal), conium maculatum (faka badiyana), datura stramonium (datura), phytolacca acinosa (brand) and rhus succedence (arkhur).

*Resins:* Pinus excelsia (kayer), cedrus deodara (deodar) and abbeis webbia (budul).

*Timber:* Betula utilis (burza), abbeis webbia (budul), ulmus wallichiana (bren) and æsculus indica (haw).



*Upmarket foods:* Morchella esculenta (guchhi) and hydnum coralloides (kao khood).

*Dringyari:* Over the centuries this has been a major camping ground of the Gujjars. It is located in a forest near the right bank of the Bungus stream, at the bottom of the eastern slope of the Nattishannar Gali (pass). It is 38 km. from Kupwârâ on the Chowkibal-Tangdar road, and 16 km. south-west of Shalurah on the route to Karnâh. The place abounds in conifers.

### Lolâb

This beautiful oval valley is about 23 km. long, north-west to south-east. At its widest it is about 5 km. Joshua Duke, an early twentieth century traveller, said, "There are few more charming spots in Kashmir than the Lolab. If it lacks the wild grandeur of Sind or the majestic splendour of Gurais or the calm expanse of the Dal and the Manasbal, it has a sylvan beauty all its own and nowhere excelled."

Walter Lawrence reported that there was in his time (the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) a Chinâr tree in Lolab with a girth of 63 feet. That record was not equalled in the 20<sup>th</sup> century either. (See also 'Bijbehârâ' in 'Ânañtnâg' district.)

The hills around Lolab valley are covered with fairly dense deodar forests. From them flow down countless little streams that join up to form the biggish Lahwal stream, which flows through the valley.

On the north is a table-land (wudar) covered with a pine forest. It is uninhabited except for a few Gujjar families. The population of Lolab mainly lives in thirty villages built amidst groves of Chinâr, walnut, apple, cherry and peach. Apart from fruit, the valley is famous for its hens.

The valley has eleven shallow and small lakes. They are mostly around 3' deep. For centuries, they have been covered with weeds, and have therefore been the habitat of the water-fowl. In Lolab there also are vast pastures where a large number of ponies graze.

In the middle of the main Lolab valley there is another little valley, flat and circular, about 9 km in diameter. At its centre is a morass that once was a lake.

The 1890 *Gazetteer* records that Vigne, the British explorer, 'noticed a curious fact connected with the natural history of [Lolab], which would go far to prove that this singular punch-bowl is the most sheltered district in Kashmir. As evening drew nigh it was astonishing to observe the number of birds of the corvus genus who came to pass the night on its plain; ravens, crows, and jackdaws were seen in almost every direction, excepting the north, where they do not repair, the country being comparatively barren. They appeared in the air above the mountain-tops, all moving towards Lolab



as a centre, and then suddenly, as they came in sight of their resting place, darted downwards with surprising velocity, crossing each other in their zig-zag, irregular flight, as if they had been influenced by terror, or the fury of a driving hurricane. As they neared the ground, they gradually slackened their speed, circled over its surface for a moment, and then alighted in such countless numbers, that the ground in some places was literally blackened with them.'

The two places in Lolab valley most favoured by tourists are Chandigam (16 km. from Kupwára) and Dorsa (18 km. from Kupwára).

The forest road between Ramour and Dorsa is extremely picturesque.

*Camping grounds:* Travellers have traditionally set up camp at Patalbag, Kumbrial, Nagmarg and Dorsa. There are Dográ era forest huts at Dorsa, Chandigam, Kumbrial, Rainawari and Kitardaji, and newer huts elsewhere.



# 10

## Pulwâmâ

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### The vital statistics

Pulwâmâ is the principal saffron-growing district of the State. It has an area of 1,398 sq.km., of which 729 sq.km. are forests. Its population was estimated at 4.04 lakh (0.4 million) in 1991. It has 561 villages, including seven uninhabited ones, as well as six towns. All but ten of its villages have electric connections and 545 have facilities for piped drinking water. Only 22% of its people were literate in 1981. Agricultural crops are sown on 0.77 lakh hectares in the district. Orchards occupy another 0.10 lakh hectares. Some 88% of the population speaks Kashmiri. The remaining 12% speak Paharhi (a language of the hills, akin to Punjabi) or Gojri (the language of the Gujjars, akin to certain Rajasthani and Gujarati dialects).

1981 census figures: Total population-4,04,078; Muslims-3,87,414; Hindus-10,096; Sikhs-6,568 (the second biggest Sikh population in the Valley). 2001 census: Population: 6,27, 284; literacy: 46.87%.

While saffron and the ambree apple are the district's best known crops, it mainly grows paddy, maize, mustard and pulses.

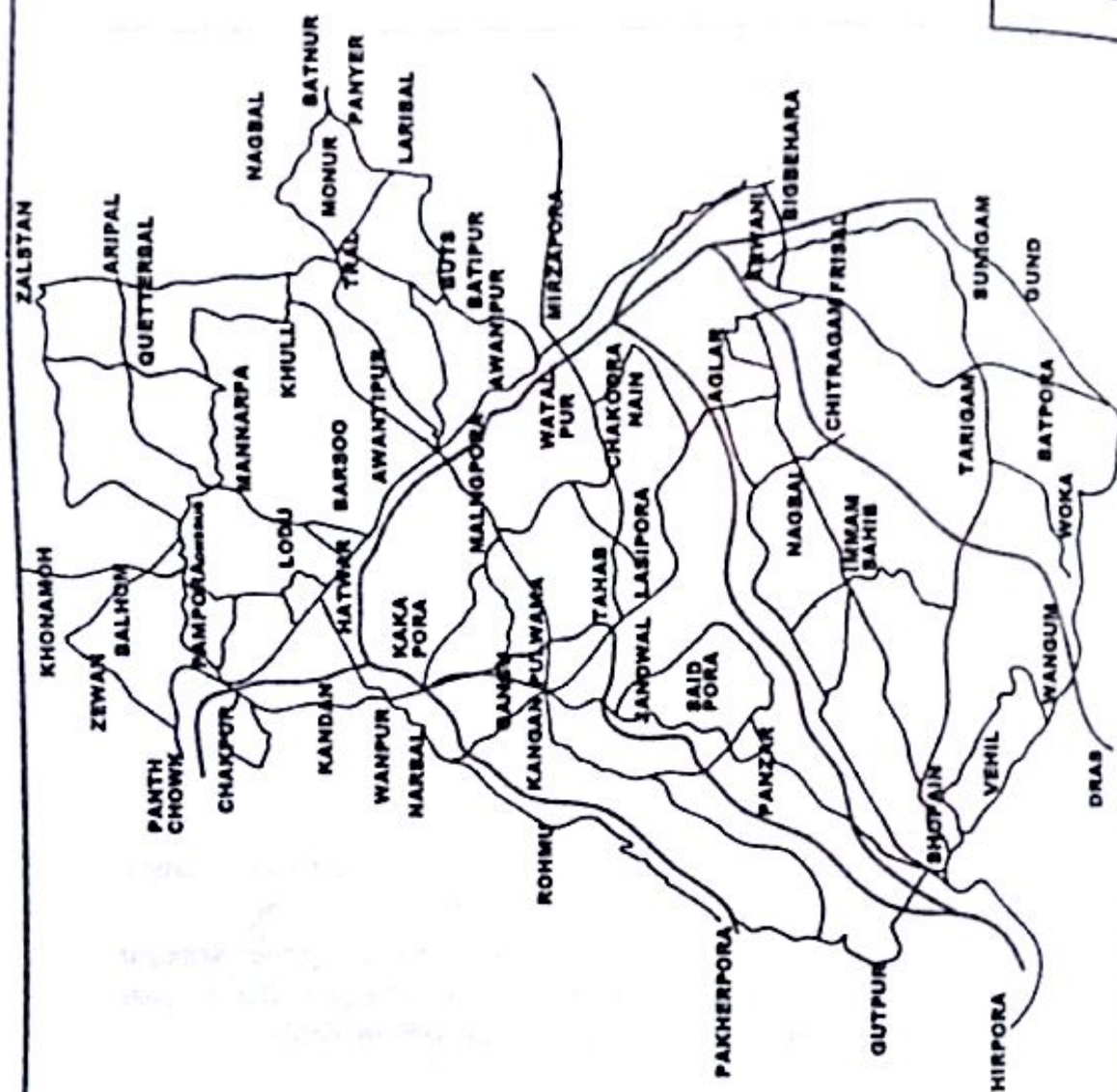
The district is just south of Srinagar. Everyone who approaches Srinagar by road from Jammû, or goes from Srinagar to Pahalgâm, has to pass through Pulwâmâ-as well as through its famous saffron fields.

### History

The original name of Pulwâmâ town (from which the district takes its name) was Panwangam. Over the centuries it got shortened to Pulgam. This in turn gradually changed to Pulwâmâ. The district abounds in ancient monuments, for example, the ruins at Awantiporâ, Jawbrari, Kakaporâ and Norastan (Trâl).



# ROAD MAP OF DISTRICT PULWAMA





Awanti Varman, the king of Kashmir from A.D. 854 to 883, shifted his capital from Srinagar to Awantiporā. Two sets of ruins of this city, including those of the Awanti Swami temple, are still to be found on the Jammū-Srinagar National Highway (NH). The other ruins are at Jawbrari, a kilometre away. Both temples were surrounded by artificial lakes. Awanti Varman's son Shanker Varman succeeded him, continued to keep Awantiporā as the capital, raised a large army from among the local people and conquered territories outside Kashmir as well.

Other luminaries associated with the district who influenced the entire Valley-and areas beyond-include Habba Khatoon, Lal Ded and Mehjoor, the poet. Lesser known outside the State, but greatly respected within, are the mystic poets Wahab Kar and Sochcha Kral.

**Lal Ded:** Like her successor, Habba Khatoon, Lal Ded, too, had mother-in-law problems, was a female poet who wrote in Kashmiri (as opposed to the more elitist Sanskrit or Persian) and tended to break earthen pitchers.

In much of India (and Persia) poets mention their names in the last verses of their songs. That is the only proof we have that Lal (pron. 'lull') Ded ('d-yed,' with soft *ds*)—or Habba Khatoon—ever existed. Both were talented-and troubled-women. Their songs and verses have been passed on orally across the generations. And yet histories, contemporāry as well those written several centuries later, are silent about them.

Lal Ded's *vākhs* (verses) were compiled and reduced to writing only as recently as in 1920 by the British scholars George A. Grierson and Lionel D. Barnett based on the oral renditions of Pandit Dharm Das Darvesh of Gush (Hañdwārā).

Lal Deū was born 'maybe earlier but very likely not later than 1320 A.D.' (writes Jayalal Kaul) to a Brāhmin family near Pandrethan (just outside present day Srinagar). Even as a child she would meditate in seclusion. Her career is believed to have been contemporaneous with the reign of Sultan Alauddin (1344-55). Her marriage, to a fellow Brāhmin from Pāmpore, then known as Padmanporā, seems to have been a disaster; painful scenes from her unhappy married life are the stuff of Kashmiri folklore. One theory is that she would generally be lost in meditation and her husband's family found this irritating.

Lal Ded took to meditating at the Zinpura ghat (river bank) near Pāmpore. Her husband wanted to find out where she went every morning. So, one day the suspicious man hid himself and when he saw Lal Ded returning home with a clay pot filled with water, he struck the pot with a stick and broke it.

Here, a miracle took place. The water did not fall on the ground and spread. Instead, it retained the shape that it had had inside the pot. So Lal



Ded picked the water up with her bare hands, and poured it into one of the pitchers inside the house. There was plenty left even after that vessel had been filled. So she used the water to fill up all the other vessels in the house and threw the rest outside the house where a pond was thus born.

This pond later came to be known as the Lal Trâg. (See also 'Bijbehârâ' in the chapter on 'Ânañtnâg'.)

Lal Ded was a disciple of Sed Bayu, an eminent Shaivite and a direct descendant of Vasugupt, who founded modern Shaivism in Kashmir.

Ultimately, Lal Ded renounced all worldly bonds, gave up her marital home and became a mendicant. She wandered from place to place singing of the unity of God. The Muslims believe that Lal Ded converted to Islâm. A grave in Bijbehârâ is supposed to be hers. Some Hindus deny that such a conversion had ever taken place.

**Mehjoor:** Ghulam Ahmed 'Mehjoor' is also known as the Shâyar-e-Kashmîr (the poet laureate of Kashmir) because his revolutionary poetry had electrified the people of Kashmir and guided their freedom struggle against monarchical rule during the Quit Kashmir movement of the 1940s. He was born in Mitrigam (Pulwâmâ district). Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore was prominent among the non-Kashmîrî admirers of Mehjoor's poetry.

**Habba Khatoon:** (See 'A History of Kashmir'.)

## Places of tourist interest

(Important: Please also see the Appendix for details of the Srinagar-Khânabal route, especially what to see en route, and distances.)

## Shrines

### Awantiporâ-The Awanti Swami temple

(28 km. south of Srinagar.) This is the temple the ruins of which everyone gets to see on the National Highway, while going from Srinagar to Jammû or Pahalgâm. Close to the banks of the Jehlum, it was built between A.D. 852 and 854. Awanti Varman founded this temple *before* becoming the king. It is also known as the Pandav Lari. 18<sup>th</sup> century accounts refer to the place as Bhyteepur.

There is a dispute as to which deity the temple is dedicated to. Some say that the presiding deity is Lord Vishnu. Others insist that it is Lord Shiva. However, at least one scholar has stated that this was a Buddhist temple. The balance of evidence points to this being a Shiva temple. In the twelfth century, Raja Jai Singh's commander Bhasan is said to have used the temple as a fortress in the course of a civil war.



The style is generally the same as that of the Martand quadrangle. However, as the *Gazetteer* notes, 'the semi-attached pillars of the arched recesses are enriched with elaborate carving of very varied character, while the large detached columns are somewhat less elegantly proportional.'

So, what caused this and the Jawbrari temples to get silted up? The war Bhasan fought inside one of them? A more likely explanation is the artificial lakes that these temples—like most other Hindu temples of Kashmīr—were surrounded by.

Some excavations began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it was mainly in 1914-16 that this temple was excavated.

**Awantipur-Mantaqi Sāheb's ziarat:** Diagonally across the road from the Awantiporā ruins is the grand *ziarat* of Syed Hussain Mantaqi, better known as 'Mantaqi Sāheb.' Most truck, bus and taxi drivers, regardless of religion, bow before the shrine as they drive by. Most of them place some money in the collection-box kept on the roadside. Mantaqi Sāheb is believed to be the protector of drivers at the Kashmīr end of the drive, to or from Jammū. Apart from his spiritual qualities, the saint is famous for having married a daughter of Kashmīr's most important and popular king, Zain-ul-Abidin @ Budshah. Mantaqi Sāheb lived and died in this village. The saint's father had migrated from Central Asia to Kashmīr during the reign of Sultan Sikander (1389-1413).

**Dādasar:** (Dadasar is about 5 km. from Trāl.) The shrine of Akbar Deen Sāheb at Dadasar is considered one of the better instances of *pinjra-kāri* (see 'Handicrafts') on wood. This is a medium-sized, rural shrine. It has been constructed atop an octagon, a style that was often used in Buddhist shrines. The main structure is in the Iranian style common in Kashmīr. The roof has three sloping tiers, often mistakenly referred to as the pagoda-style. The octagonal 'steeple' is a very fine example of the Rûm style spires used in Kashmīr. (Rûm, pron. 'room,' refers to Ottoman Turkey. It literally means 'Roman Turkey.') Tall windows, made in the *pinjra* style of lattice, surround it. Each window has a unique design, different from the other windows. The architect's intention was to showcase in a single monument as many examples of contemporāry *pinjra kāri* as possible.

What fascinates me about the architecture of shrines like this (and Srīnagar's Khānqāh-e-Mu'allā, and the shrine that got burnt at nearby Trāl) is its architraves. These are elaborate doorframes. The doorframes of all modern houses are flat. However, Dadasar's architraves are at four or five levels, and each level has a different pattern. You might find the colours very bright, but that is part of their charm. The wooden exteriors of this shrine (and the one in neighbouring Drumbal) have been painted green. I prefer the wood being left unpainted, as at Khānqāh-e-Mu'allā. However, this green, too, is what makes this kind of architecture unique.



Akbar Deen S  heb was the father of Zay Ded. In turn, Zay Ded was the wife of Sheikh-ul-Aalam Sheikh Nur-ud-Din R  sh  .

**Degam:** (South of Shopian.) Shr  ddh ceremonies of Hindus who die in their childhood are performed during the Kapal Mochan festival of Degam village. People donate clothes and utensils in the memory of these children.

**Drumbal:** This village is sometimes called Amir  b  d, after Hazrat Ameer Kabeer Sh  h-e-Hamad  n. It is on the Tr  l-Dadasar road and is roughly 3 km. from either. To reach the shrine you have to get off the main road and take a side road that slopes downwards. Your car will take you to the beginning of this charming village, through which a stream runs. From there you will have to walk around 600 metres to get to the small but pretty shrine dedicated to the Sh  h.

It is said that this shrine is a scaled down version of the much bigger Kh  nq  h-e-Faiz Pan  h at neighbouring Tr  l, which burned down in 1997. Even in its own right it is a very fine example of Kashmiri woodwork.

**Jawbrari-The Awantishwar temple:** The ruins of this temple, in all probability dedicated to Lord Shiva, were excavated in 1914-16. Awanti Varman built it in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, *after* he became the king, for the use of commoners. This temple, too, is on the national highway, a kilometre north of the Awantipor   ruins, in a village now known as Jawbara.

**Khrew: The temple and the fair:** On the fourteenth day of Sawan/ Har (July/August) a fair (mela) is held at a Hindu temple atop a hillock in Khrew, 22 km. from Srinagar. It is about 5 km. from Woyin. Nearly 200 steps lead from the ground to the temple. The hillock is believed to have once been a volcano and the fair is called the "*Fair of the Volcano*" (Mela Jwala Mukhi). The deity of the temple is Sahoala Bhagwati, the goddess of fire. There is a sulphur spring at the bottom of the hillock in which pilgrims bathe before climbing the stone steps that lead to the temple. There is a dharmsh  l   near the temple, for pilgrims to stay in. (There is a sulphur spring at Woyin as well.)

Substantial offerings are made at the temple, which are collected by its managers, the Dharmarth Trust. Several Muslims take part in the fair. More than three hundred stalls are set up during the fair, most of them run by Muslims. However, the Hindus own the stalls which sell earthen lamps with *ghee* (clarified butter) and cotton wicks, to be lit during religious ceremonies, especially during the rituals of the fair.

**Fossiliferous strata:** The limestone ridges to the west and north of Khrew and Khunmoh has a layer rich in fossilised plants.

**Ludov:** 25 km. south-east of Srinagar. This is one of the oldest temples, indeed one of the oldest extant structures, in Kashmir. It is dedicated to Rudresh. Bakaya, who rightly uses the word 'primitive' to describe this



'plain and simple walled structure', writes, 'Its early character receives confirmation from the fact that it resembles in several respects one of the buildings of Gāndhāra, the Vihara of Guniyar in the Swat valley...'. By comparing it with the 5<sup>th</sup> century Vihara in what is now Pakistan, Bakaya surmises that the Ludov temple might have been built around the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

**Narasthan:** Around 50 km. from Srinagar. These temple ruins are located where the Trāl valley begins. There are tall mountains behind the temple. In front of it is a small valley. Percy Brown, quoted by Bakaya, wrote, 'The pediment and arch motif appears in a further process of development... the flat offsets have been elaborated into moulded niches with triangular canopies and sunk trefoil arch introduced. Around the shrine is also thrown an enclosure wall forming a courtyard entered by a prominent gateway. Here the style is seen approaching its final form.'

**Payer:** 32 km. from Srinagar. This village is 3 km. south of Pulwāmā town and 18 km. south of Pāmpore, on the banks of a stream and at the feet of the Koil karewa. It is on the road to Shopian. The karewa that the ruins are on is the Nownagri karewa, also known as the Nowgam Uddar.

**The Payer temple:** (Also referred to by historians as the **Pa Yech** temple): It is not clear who constructed this temple. However, stylistically it is similar to the Pandrethan temple. One theory is that the 9<sup>th</sup> century King Narindraditya built it.

There is debate even about the deity or deities that this temple is dedicated to. Some feel that the sculptures above the doorway represent the Hindu trinity (the Lords Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh/ Shiva) and the goddess Durgā. Others say that all four figures represent Lord Shiva, albeit in different manifestations: Barov, Lokeshwar, Nataraj, etc. In any case, the bull shown is Nandi, which indicates that this is primarily a Shiva temple.

The *Gazetteer* says that 'surrounded by a few walnut and willow trees... [the] temple... in intrinsic beauty and elegance of outline is superior to all the existing remains in Kashmir of similar dimensions. Its excellent preservation may probably be explained by the retired situation at the foot of the high table-land which separates it by an interval of 5 or 6 miles from the bank of the Jehlum [sic], and by the marvellous solidity of its construction.'

Its roof consists of ten stones.

**Sheikh Bairzid Shimnagi's ziarat** is located above Payer village, towards the wudar.

If you happen to be in the area, you might want to check out the ruins of the Hindu temple at Koil, less than two km. north-east of Payer (or 8 km. south-west of Anantnaga).



**Pinjoora   sar Sharief:** 12 km. from Pulw  m   town, in the direction of Shopian. This is easily the most venerable Muslim shrine of the district because it houses some relics of Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, which are displayed on special occasions. It is the only shrine in all South Asia to have relics (in this case, hair) of three of Isl  m's most venerable figures. The other two are Hazrat Ab   Baqar Siddiq and Dastg  r S  heb. There is a rectangular pond nearby, the waters of which were considered sacred enough to take home in bottles. It has got polluted considerably since.

**Shopian-J  m   Masjid:** 48 km. from Srinagar, Shopian is an important town in its own right. Its importance increased because of its position as a halt on the Mughal Road. The picturesque J  m   Masjid here is believed to have been built during the Mughal period (1586-1752). The architecture, especially the arches, cornices, windows and doors, is very Saracenic, though.

**Tr  l-Shah-e-Hamad  n's shrine:** This ornate wooden shrine, the Kh  nq  h-e-Faiz Pan  h, built by Mir Syed Ali Hamad  ni in the centre of a sunny courtyard, was gutted in a fire in 1997. Efforts are on to reconstruct the shrine. I had the honour of supervising the reconstruction, which is scheduled to be completed in 2004, I was not able to convince the people of Tr  l to rebuild the shrine in wood. As a compromise we are going in for grand dimensions, but a stone fa  ade. If you want to see what the original might have looked like, go over to neighbouring Drumbal, where a smaller version exists.

The original *kh  nq  h* was built by Mir Syed Muhammad Hamad  ni. It is also known as the Kh  nq  h-e-  l  . This alternate name is also a chronogram, which tells us that the shrine was constructed in 868 Hijri (A.D. 1469).

**Festivals:** This shrine has two well-attended annual *urs*. That of Mir Syed Ali Hamad  ni is held on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the Hijri month of Zilhaj. His son's *urs* is on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of Rabi ul Awwal.

Nearby, in Tr  l Pain, is the *ziarat* of Hazrat Mir Syed Muhammad Hamad  ni, the renowned son of the Shah-e-Hamad  n, Mir Syed Ali Hamad  ni. Among the prized possessions of the shrine is a relic of Hazrat Abu B  qar Siddiq, one of the four Righteous Caliphs of Isl  m and one of the closest companions of Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him.

### Other important places of tourist interest

**Aharbal:** (61 km from Srinagar or 13 km. from Shopian.) Surrounded by fir forests, Aharbal is famous for its 24.4 metre waterfall created by River Vishav (Veshau). There is supposed to be a Tourist Bungalow (but please check its state of repair before deciding to spend the night there) and a PWD Rest House. The best views of the fall are from its right bank. The best



times to see it are the morning and noon, because the rays of the sun that hit the spray create rainbows. (See also the entry on 'Veshau' in the chapter on 'Rivers'.)

**Gufkral:** This is a neolithic site in Trāl tehsil. Radio-carbon dating puts its date at 2470 B.C. The people who lived here had pet dogs. They also reared sheep and goats. Other animals the bones of which have been excavated here include the Himālayan ibex, the wolf and the antler. Arguably this is the oldest human settlement discovered so far in the state. It is possible that these people had taken to agriculture. Some grains have been found but not yet dated. Pottery, tools and spindle whorls made of stone have also been found here.

**Hurporā:** 12 km. from Shopian, located on the Mughal Road, and accessible by bus, Hurporā is known for its splendid scenery.

**Kounsar Nag lake, the:** (Roughly 12,000'. See 'Trekking in Kashmīr' for how to get to the lake.) Bakaya says that the name of the lake derives from the Sanskrit *Krama Saras*, 'krama' meaning 'footstep' and 'saras' being 'lake'. It is also called the Vishnu Paudh ('Lord Vishnu's foot'). Either way, the lake seems to be associated with Lord Vishnu, unusual for a valley where the Hindus are supposed to belong entirely to Lord Shiva's sect. Its old name—and that of the three tall surrounding mountains, one of which is 15,253' high—was Kysur.

This blue lake is three kilometres long and around 2.25 km. at its widest. Vigne, c. 1870, wrote, 'Judging from the angle at which the slopes enter the lake, the bottom must originally have been about 200 feet in depth below the present level of the water... The formation is a beautiful amygdaloid, containing spots of quartz in a dull, dark, purple-coloured matrix. This formation, which is very common in Kashmīr, the natives call the *chitur deyu*, or the *devil's small-pox*, supposing it to be a disease in the rock caused by the evil eye.'

The Nag freezes over till mid-June. Even after that large chunks of ice remain on the surface. To the south of the lake is a glacial valley. A stream flows out of the lake. It goes on to become the Veshau/ Vishav river.

**Legends:** There are two alternative legends about the three basaltic peaks and the lake. (i) According to the older one the peaks were the thrones of the Hindu trinity, the Lords Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh (Shiva) when they fought the demon Jalodbhav and dried up the Satisar (or Satisaras). (For details see 'Bārāmullā'.) (ii) Others say that the highest-western—peak was the throne of a king. The next, the middle peak, was where his *vizier* would sit, and the nobles on the eastern one.

Those who believe in the former version go on to link the highest peak with the Manu (Noah) legend. Apparently, Goddess Durgā transformed



herself into a huge ark (all right, boat). Lord Vishnu became a fish, in what is known as his *Matsya Avatar* ('fish incarnation'). After the 'ark' had been filled with all those who had been chosen to be saved from the flood, the Lord towed it to the western peak and moored it there. Ever since, Hindus have been going to the lake and the western peak on the '*Naubandhan Teerth*' or 'the pilgrimage of the mooring of the boat'. (Nau= boat; bandhan= mooring of; teerth= pilgrimage).

All the same, Vigne observed that the Kounsar Nag was 'not held in the same estimation as the Ganga Bal on the opposite side of the valley.'

**Kungwattan:** This is a large 'woodland' meadow, mostly used by Gujjar cowherds for the grazing of their cattle. It is a 6 to 8 km. trek (or pony-ride) from Aharbal. Kungwattan is on the right bank of River Vishav and about a kilometre and a half south of the junction of the Chitti Nadi. The high altitude Kounsar Nag lake is another 11 km. ahead, on foot. The lake freezes over between November and June.

**Naqberan:** 2 km. from Trâl, this is a small grassy valley, which lies between the valley of the Sind river and the Kashmir Valley. Also known as Nagberan, the valley falls on the route between Zostan village and the Mârsar.

**Pâmpore:** 16 km. from Srinagar on the National Highway. If you drive from Jammû or Pahalgâm to Srinagar, Pâmpore will come up just before Srinagar. On the other hand, if you had flown into Srinagar, then Pâmpore is just outside Srinagar, on the way to Jammû/Pahalgâm. Its importance is mainly due to its saffron fields, which are on both sides of the National Highway. Saffron is grown in just three places: Spain, Iran and Jammû and Kashmir. Within the state Pâmpore is the main saffron growing area. It is a brief stretch that is about five kilometres long and equally wide. It grows this incredibly expensive plant because of its clayey *karewa* soil. (See also 'Saffron' in the chapter on 'Flora'.)

The tomb of Khwaja Masood in Pâmpore town is one of the more important shrines of the district. The Khwaja was a businessman. However, he renounced all worldly bonds and went into a cave to meditate non-stop for three months. He performed several miracles and died in 1021 Hijri (A.D. 1611).

**Shikârgâh:** 6 to 13 km. from Trâl, Shikârgâh (lit.: 'the hunting ground') was developed by the kings-Mahârâjâ Hari Singh in particular-as a place for hunting and recreation. It now is a wildlife reserve. The accommodation there is controlled by the Chief Wildlife Warden, TRC, Srinagar. There are three buses a day from Trâl to Shikârgâh. All three return to Trâl roughly two hours later.



**Târsar and Mârsar:** 'When you were away,' King Yusuf Shah Chak (late 16<sup>th</sup> century) wrote of his beloved, 'your plaits reminded me of the Târsar and Mârsar lakes.' These twin lakes are located in the mountains and are 3 and 5 km. respectively from Nagberan. Both lie between the valleys of the Sind and Kashmir. You can get to the Târsar either from the northern end of Trâl valley or from Lidderwatt. The Mârsar is almost a mile long and more than half a mile broad and is shaped like an arc. It is covered with snow till late summer and is also the source of the Arrah river. It can be reached either from Trâl or from Lidderwatt. There are two trails from Trâl: from Narastan, which is the best path, or from Zostan. (See also 'Trekking in Kashmir'.)

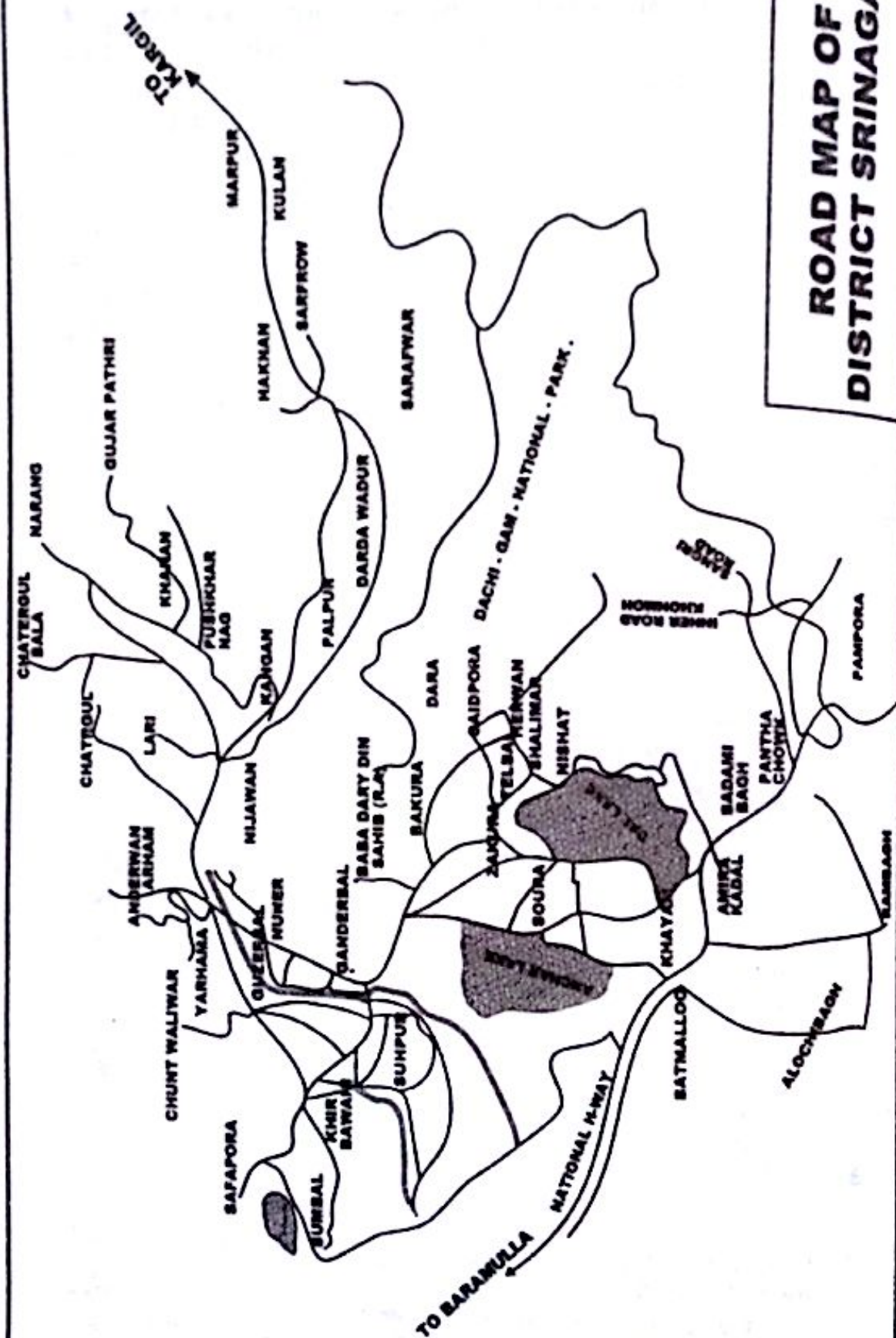
In South Asia, any food or drink that has been touched by a human (or animal) mouth is considered unclean (*jhoothâ*). Ditto for food or water touched by unclean hands. The shepherds who live near these two lakes believe that 'fairies live inside these lakes.' Therefore, one should not gargle or spit into these lakes or otherwise dirty their waters.<sup>1</sup> Even the Muslims consider it a sin to catch fish in these lakes.

1 Such tales have obviously been made up to keep people from dirtying up the pure waters of these lakes.

In Safâpur near Lake Mânasbal there's a taboo against fishing. The real reason is that the fish of the area are so defenceless and easy to catch that one can grab them with bare hands. This has been dressed up as an elaborate superstition, according to which fish caught in the Safapur area will turn into blood in the vessel that you cook them in.



# ROAD MAP OF DISTRICT SRINAGAR.





# 11

## Srînagar City

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### The vital statistics

Srînagar district, including the rural areas, has an area of 2,228 sq. km., of which 660 sq. km. consist of forests. In 1981, the population of the district was 7.08 lakh (0.7 million), of whom 5.7 lakh lived in Srînagar and two other towns (Kangan and Ganderbal). The remaining 1.38 lakh lived in 168 villages. (In addition there are 7 uninhabited villages). In 1991, the population of the district was estimated at 8.92 lakh. In 2001, there were 12.11 lakh (1.21 million) people in the district and literacy was 58.38%.

*Note:* Srînagar city (5214' at the lowest) straddles two districts, Srînagar and Budgâm. The areas between the Srînagar airport and the Ram Bâgh Bridge are all in Budgâm district. These are all modern residential areas, which came up after 1947, when the city began to expand.

In 1981, literacy was 33%. The cultivated area of the district is 24,000 hectares. At 401 people per square kilometre in 1981, the population density of this district was and remains the highest in the state.

1981 census figures: Total population-7,08,328; Muslims-6,42,106; Hindus-59,449; Sikhs-6,334; Christians-209.

### Geography/location

When you drive up to Srînagar from the south (i.e. from Jammû or Pahalgâm), you will travel mostly through the Ânañtnâg and Pulwâmâ districts. You will enter Srînagar district only just before entering the town itself. But when you drive to the city from the Srînagar airport you will travel through Badgam district even *after* entering the town, as explained above. That is because the town lies in two districts. Srînagar airport is in Badgam district.



However, if you travel northwards from the city, towards Ladâkh, you will remain in the district for at least three hours (until roads improve dramatically), going past Kheer Bhawâni/ Tulamula (which are on a side road), Ganderbal, Kangan and finally Sonamarg. It's only half-way through the dZoji La pass that you will leave Srinagar and enter Kargil (Ladâkh).

If you go past Sonamarg towards Baltal, and after that Sri Amarnâth ji, you will cross into Anantnâg district well before the Holy Cave.

And when you go from Srinagar to Gulmarg you will pass through Budgâm before entering Bâramullâ district.

Thus, Srinagar borders as many as five districts.

## The Lakes of Srinagar

Most people have heard of just the 14.75 sq. km. Dal Lake. Some know of the Nageen as well. In fact, Srinagar has five lakes. This is how they are linked: The Dal merges with the Nageen. It is also connected, through a small estuary, to the 6.5 sq. km. Âñchâr Lake. The Khushhâl Sar and Gil Sar are two small, interlinked lakes that flow into the Âñchâr. The Brârî Nimbâl could be considered Srinagar's sixth lake. However, the Khushhâl and Gil Sars, as well as the Brârî Nimbâl, are not at present meant for casual, recreational tourists.

The Sindh river flows into the Anchar. The waters of the Anchar, in turn, flow into the Jehlum. The Dal Lake and the Jehlum would have flowed into each other had the Dal Gate not been built to separate the two. This gate ensures that the Dal Lake does not empty itself into the Jehlum when the waters of the river are low. It also prevents the Dal from getting flooded by the Jehlum when the river is in spate. Between the Dal and the Jehlum is a canal called the Tsont (or Chunt)-e-Kol. The Tsont-e-Kol begins near the Dal Gate, where it meets the Dal Lake. It ends near the Badshah Bridge/ Shergarhi (Divisional Commissioner's office) complex, where it merges with River Jehlum. Actually, the Tsont-e-Kol begins well before the Dal Gate, but that end is closed at present.

## The Shikârâs

### History

These are flat-bottomed boats with a cloth canopy. The canopy is higher at the rear and lower in the front. While researching Kashmiri art, I came upon a 15<sup>th</sup> century miniature painting which showed full-fledged shikaras. So, this type of boat is at least that old.



*Seating capacity:* A shikara is allowed to carry five adults, or three adults and four children. Please don't overload the shikara. Your own life could be in danger. You have to pay extra 'halting charges' if you extend your trip beyond the specified period.

### Routes

Shikaras ply on the Dal and Nageen lakes, mainly to provide joy-rides to tourists. Their less comfortable (and infinitely less expensive) cousins carry local commuters across the Jehlum, from one bank to the one immediately opposite. Sixteen joyride-routes and three river-crossings are popular with tourists.

The Jehlum-crossings that you will find most convenient are all from the Bund (parallel to and just off the Residency/ Sherwani Road). 'Aab' means 'water' and 'guzar' is 'to cross'. *Aab e guzar*, thus, indicates the point at which to cross the Jehlum.

Go to Lal Chowk and stand in front of the clock tower. Tyndale Biscoe School will now be in front of you, on the left. Amira Kadal will be on your right. In front will be a major lane. This is the Forest Lane. Go through it to the Bund. You'll find boats to take you to the SPS Museum/ Lal Mandi area.

Listed below are the most popular routes and crossings. Unless specified otherwise, all timings are for return trips. (A *ghat* is a riverbank, normally a bank on which a platform and/ or steps have been constructed.)

- a) *From the Boulevard:* The best known shikara rides from here are to i-ii) the Nishat and Shalimar (Mughal) gardens. The two gardens are quite far apart from each other; iii-v) the Kuttar ('Kabootar') Khânâ and Char Chinâr islands. (There are two Char Chinârs: Rop Lank and Son Lank. The Rop Lank is the closer of the two and is the one that most shikaras go to.); vi) the Cheshmashahi Ghat. (This is next to the Nehru Memorial Botanical Gardens. The Cheshmashahi garden is an uphill walk of almost 2 km. from here.); and vii-ix) Hazratbal, Nageen lake and Naseem Bâgh (5-hour return trips to any one of these three places; or a 6-hour loop-return trip for all three.); x) the Chhattabal Wier (3 or 4 hours downstream; return by vehicle, because the water will be upstream. This shikara ride is on River Jehlum and not on any of the lakes).

Normally tourists combine i or ii with iii or iv (4½ to 6 hours return, including halts). You can also combine iv and vi (3 hours).

- b) *From the Dal Gate:* There are short rides from the 'First Ghat' to i) Nehru Park (2-2½ hours return); and ii) the bathing boats



in the middle of the Dal Lake (2½ to 3 hours return). (Incidentally, there are bathing boats in the Nageen, too.)

- c) *From the Nehru Park ghat* (bank) to i) the bathing boats of the Dal (1 to 1½ hours return); ii) the Nehru Island (This ride takes a few minutes. You can pay per passenger or for the entire shikara).
- d) *From the Jehlum:* You can take a shikara from one of the registered ghats to i) the Nishat and Shalimar gardens, via Kuttar Kh  n   and the closer Char Chin  r island (Rop Lank) (6½ hours return; skip one of the two gardens and save half an hour); ii) Char Chin  r and Cheshmashahi (5 hours); iii) the Chhattabal Wier (3½ to 4 hours).
- e) *From the Nageen Club* to the bathing boats of the Nageen (1 to 1½ hours).
- f) *Visit a houseboat* on the Dal (thirty minutes return) to see what one looks like from the inside. Most shikara-operators can arrange such a visit for you.
- g) *Nageen Lake:* Cross it from east to west (in less than thirty minutes).
- h) *From the Char Chin  r ghat* to the Char Chin  r island: (1½ to 2 hours). Here, too, you can pay per head or for the whole shikara.

I strongly recommend any trip that takes you down the Jehlum to the Chhattabal Wier (aka 'Vier' and 'Veer'). Forget joyrides. This will be a trip through history, culture and architecture, with Hindu temples and bathing ghats as well as stunning Muslim shrines along the banks of the Jehlum.

## Houses of worship

(See also the historical shrines, temples, mosques etc., listed elsewhere in this chapter):

### Muslim

- The J  m   Masjid in 'downtown' S  rinagar, just ahead of Naqshband S  heb
- Hazratbal, near the University Campus
- Makhdoom S  heb (the shrine of Sheikh Hamza) on Hari Parbat, on the way to the University Campus
- Shah-e-Hamad  n (Kh  nq  h-e-Mu'alla), close to Fateh Kadal
- Dastg  r S  heb (Kh  nq  h-e-Meer Syed Abdul Qadir Jeelani), 2 km. from Dal Gate



- Naqshband Sâheb (Khânqâh-e-Muhammad Baha-ud-din Naqshbandi), near Dastgîr Sâheb
- The Imam Bara of Jadibal (often misspelt Zadibal)
- The Imam Bara of Hassanabad
- The Shahi Masjid, Mujahid Manzil near Fateh Kadal
- The Patther Masjid, opposite Mujahid Manzil, Fateh Kadal

### Hindu

- The Hanuman Temple, Amira Kadal
- The hilltop Shankaracharya Temple that you can see from everywhere: climb up from behind Jan Bakers or drive right up to the temple from the Boulevard (from opposite the Nehru Park island)
- The Shârikâ temple on the Hari Parbat
- The Durgâ Nag Temple, Durgâ Nag (between Jan Bakers and the UN observers' office)
- The Raghunath Temple

### Sikh

- Chhatti Padshahi (Gurudwara Singh Sabha), Kathi Darwaza, on the way to the University Campus
- Gurudwârâ Shaheed Bungâ, Bâghât Barzullâ
- Kalgî Sâheb, Jawahar Nagar

### Christian

- Protestant Church, Munshi Bâgh (All Saints, Sonawar)
- Holy Family Roman Catholic Church, Maulana Âzâd Road

### Srinagar City: Important places of tourist interest Recreational:

**Afghân Military Camp:** Travel from the Nishat Garden towards Hazratbal on the Foreshore Road. The Dal Lake will now be on your left. The Foreshore Road comes to an end at Habak. At that corner, before the road turns left for Hazratbal, in front of you, on the right, will be the ruins of a medieval fortress. Its main entrance is on the road between Hazratbal and Naseem Bâgh on the other (National Highway) side. Today the fortress and the surrounding plot are the private property of a wealthy local family.

There are four different theories, perhaps all of them correct, about this complex. i) Lashkar Khân, Shah Jehan's governor of Kashmir, got it constructed. ii) In 1068 AH, the place was renamed Saifabad because Saif Khân, Aurangzeb's governor of Kashmir, made improvements. He tapped



River Indus at Lâr and brought its waters in a canal to this building for its irrigation and other water needs.

The 19th century historian Hassan manages to combine theories i) and ii). He refers to the place as 'Bâgh-e-Lashkar Khân, in village Bataporâ, in Paragana-e-Phâk (Habak) on the northern side of the Dal Lake; made by Saif Khân in 1068 AH in the reign of Alam Gir (Aurangzeb)'. (*Tarikh-e-Kashmîr*, Vol I, p. 301, 1954 edition, Research and Publications Division).

iii) In 1293 AH (1876 AD), Mahârâjâ Ranbir Singh established a silk factory here and renamed it Bâgh-e-Ranbir and also Sri Raghunathpura Bâgh. (See also 'Silk' in the chapter on Handicrafts.) Today neither the silk factory, nor the garden nor even the canal survive.

iv) This nameless and little known ruin is supposed to have also served as an eighteenth century Afghân camp/ garrison. The Afghân army used to camp here on its way to Gilgit. Even today it is on the route one takes to Sonamarg, and onward to Ladâkh: though it is best approached from the lake/ Foreshore Road.

Mirza Haidar Dughlat (16<sup>th</sup> century) was the first in recorded history to have used this route. He was also the first Mughal to rule Kashmir, as Governor to his brother-in-law, Emperor Humayun. After the Afghâns, Hari Singh Nalwa, the Sikh General, used this route (and, presumably, this camp). So did Ghulam Mohiuddin, who was the Sikhs' Governor of Kashmir, and his son Imam Din.

In the 20th century a wealthy local family, the Shahdads, took over the property. Therefore, now almost everyone calls it the Shahdad Bâgh. I stumbled upon the ruins when the Foreshore Road was being built. At my request Mr. G.R. Bhatt read up all that he could on the place and gave me the four theories above. I believe that we are the only two persons alive who consider this an important historical monument and tourist attraction.

**Âñchâr Sâr:** "Formerly, the said lake was much smaller. In 1300 AH [AD 1882], the Sindlar being flooded turned its course and entered Anchar Sar [sar= lake]; it destroyed the agricultural land on every side, and widened the space of the lake three-fold. In its middle Raja Jayapid had built a dam which is called Ramu Sathu." (Hassan, the 19th century historian).

In 1999, this author got a sixth of this 6.5 sq.km. lake cleared of weeds to prove that the Anchar can be made as pretty as the Dal merely by 'deweeding' it. I also got a low wall constructed at one end. This prevents the waters of the lake from flowing into the Jehlum when the level of the river is lower than that of the lake. In 2000, I got constructed gates to regulate the flow of water.

The Jenab Sâheb shrine is on the banks of the lake. One of the many springs that feed the lake can be seen at the ghat closest to the shrine.



The **Bâchhi Darwaza** is a stately stone gate. When the Mughals constructed the walled city of Nâgar-Nagar (i.e. downtown Srinagar) in the 1580s and 1590s, this was one of the three entrances they had provided. Such walls protecting civilian residential areas are commonplace in most of the old cities of India.

The wall itself was built by Akbar, the Mughal Emperor, around 1592, to enclose the royal city of Nâgar-Nagar. It is almost 5 km. long, 9 metres high and 4 metres thick. Bastions, each about 11 metres high, strengthen it at intervals of about forty-five metres. Its three gateways are: the Bâchhi Darwaza on the west, the Kâthi Darwaza on the south east, and the Sanghin Darwaza on the north-west.

**Baha-ud-din, cemetery of:** The cemetery of Baha-ud-Din Sâheb contains several "Hindu" ruins. These include a huge gateway near the entrance, which is traditionally said to have been a part of the Pravaresh temple built by Pravaresena II. It also has the graves of important Muslims. "One of the tombstones bears a bilingual Sanskrit and Arabic inscription which mentions the name of Muhammad Shah, the puppet ruler who was made king and dethroned no less than four times." (R.C. Kak)

**Bren (or Brain)** is an exquisite village in which far too many people with lots of money but little taste built their countryhouses in the last decades of the twentieth century. It begins at the northeast end of the Dal, where the lake is known as the Bud Dal. In 1835, Vigne wrote that there were 'two chunars (sic) at the village of Bryn (sic), 170 years old...' The Gazetteer adds that "from this village is a footpath over the mountains to the town of Pampur (sic); the journey occupies a day."

**Budshah's (mother's) tomb:** There is much controversy about the so-called "Budshah's Tomb". Most scholars agree that it is the tomb of Budshah's mother. They argue that (i) it has a door towards the qibla (the direction of Mecca) and thus is clearly un-Islâmic; (ii) it has all kinds of Hindu idols in its lower half (only till the floor level, actually). True, the gates of the graveyard, the gate between the Gadyâr mosque and the rope-and-wool shop, and the foundations of the central structure are distinctly Hindu. However, the rest of this multiple-domed tomb is clearly not.

"Immediately to the north of this building is a Hindu enclosure wall with a gateway, which contains a number of tombs, one of which is said to preserve the remains of the king himself.... Since the time of Zain-ul-Abidin this enclosure has been used as a cemetery, and many of the notabilities of Muslim Kashmîr are interred here, among them the famous Tartar invader Mirza Haidar Gurgan [Dughlat]." (From R.C. Kak)

Srinagar has at least three *Mazâr-e-Salâteen* (graveyards of Sultans). The enclosure Kak refers to is one of them, and the best maintained.



Maulvi Abdul Aziz of the Research Library, Srinagar, once told me, 'Budshah's mother's tomb has been built atop the Bhatârik Mutt of the Buddhists. The Vihar had been in disuse. There were no Buddhists left [in Kashmir]. So, to ensure that no one desecrated the Vihar or urinated there, this mazâr was built. The Royal Palace of the Hindu kings used to be in the compound of this tomb. During those days transportation was by boat. The other royal palace of Hari (Harsh) Deo was in Habba Kadal. He was killed and the palace was burned.'

The "Ancient Site **Burzahama**" or **Burzahom** is generally believed to be the oldest historical site in Kashmir, perhaps in the whole state. There are eleven megaliths, five of which are "more or less erect". It is estimated that the ruins date to 2500 B.C. (The site at Gukral, Pulwâmâ, is older still.) See 'Srinagar district' for details.

**Châr Chinâr:** The island of the four (châr) chinârs is correctly called the Rop (or Roopa) Lank (or the silver island). It is an artificial island in the middle of the Astawhol division of the Dal Lake. At any given time you will find three full-grown Chinârs, and a fourth 'baby' Chinâr. The 19th century historian Hassan writes thus about the Rop Lank, "In the middle of the Small [section of the] Dal there is the Roopa Lank island which was built by Sultan Hasan Shah [AD 1475-87]. Its building became desolate during the time of the Sikh rule."

In 2001, the Chief Minister, Dr. Abdullah, asked this author, as Secretary of the Floriculture Department, to get the island renovated. I used the opportunity to increase the size of the island by about 30%. According to an 1890 account, it was '50 yards square' then. Before we started working, the island was roughly 100 feet by 100 feet. When we finished our work it was 128' x 130'. Over the centuries the island must have been eroded somewhat. In the 1980s, one of the walls had been rebuilt, unfortunately in a 'modern' style. My department got the three remaining sides of the island fortified with traditional stone retaining walls.

**Cheshmashahi:** The Royal (Shahi) Springs (Cheshma) are situated atop a row of three man-made terraces, which can be ascended by three flights of steps. The gardens around the spring follow the layout used by the Mughals at the Shalimar and Nishat gardens as well. The first summer house here was built by Shaikh Ghulam Mohiuddin, the chief munshi (civilian administrator or secretary) of Nao Nihal Singh. The present, unapologetically ugly, red building was built by the Mughals. This is surprising because the Mughals generally had good taste in architecture. A 19th century bârâdari built by the Dogrâs was demolished around 1976, on the ground that it was not part of the original, it blocked the view and did not fit in. (A 19th century Dogrâ bârâdari in the Nishat garden was demolished around the same time.)



An inscription was once carved at the gateway. It indicated that the garden was constructed in AD 1632-33, and was also known as the *kausar e shahi*. Kausar and cheshma are synonyms. It is likely that the garden was constructed at the behest of Shah Jehan himself.

**Chhatabal Weir:** This weir was constructed at the northern end of the town in 1915. Avery, a British contractor, executed the project for the Dogrâ Mahârâjâ. It has been designed to raise the level of the river by 7 feet. This is essential in winter when the level of the river falls, often alarmingly so. The weir is lowered during the rains and when the snow melts. It is raised in winter or whenever required.

The weir is 453' long. Boats that are upto 150' long and 20' wide can pass through it.

**The Dal Lake:** The word Dal could have either come from "bal," the Kashmîrî word for "lake," or from the Tibetan word "dal," which means 'still'. It is believed that there used to be a vast plain called Vitâlamarg, which was converted into the Dal lake by an ancient Hindu king. This must have been before the Christian era, because the Drogjun sluice gate—where the Dal joins the Tsoni-i-Kol canal on the Jhelum—was originally built by King Pravarsena in AD 59. So was the old embankment leading to the city.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century historian Hassan estimated the circumference of the lake at 10 miles (16 km.) "According to historians," he wrote, "in ancient times it was a wasteland called Talni Marg. Rajâ Pravarasena dammed the Behet [the Jhelum] at Nawapurâ and made it flow into the town up to the foot of the Maran mountain [the Hari Parbat]. After a period of time, the Behet had a flood in the time of Rajâ Duralab Darun and caused the field to be flooded. Thus it turned into a lake. The governors of the time did not dam it and hence after a long time it became very deep. Sultan Sikandar... constructed a strong dam from Naidyar to Nishat garden... and then built six stone bridges over it.

"After that Saif Khân built a dam from Khwajâ Yarbâl to Aishabad as a thoroughfare to the gardens."

That explains the thoroughfare. Or does it? The Gazetteer says, 'The lake is crossed by a narrow path running along a raised causeway called the Sûtta or Sut-i-Chodri, said to have been constructed by a wealthy Hindû pandit. [It starts at] Naid Yâr...'

For the histories of the two main islands in the lake, please see 'Char Chinâr/ Rop Lank' and 'Son Lank', elsewhere in this chapter.

The lake used to have an area of 22.5 square km. in the 19th century. However, it has now shrunk to almost half of its former self, to 14.75 sq km. Much of what has gone consisted of marsh. Going by 19th century accounts, however, the lake's depth has not changed much—or at all. The



Gazetteer (1890) says that the average depth of the lake is around 7 to 10 feet, going up to 26 feet at one place. This is still true of the lake. In the 1990s, the government 'desilted' the bank next to the Northern Foreshore Road. The lake at that bank is now 9 metres deep, as a result.

The lake is shrinking only partly due to the silt that comes down from the mountains with the rains. The main reason is human greed and shortsightedness. In 2003, there were as many as 60,000 people living inside the lake, on islands and in houseboats. For centuries, some of them have been growing vegetables and flowers on the surface of the lake, legally. However, many of them have also been creating artificial islands, to live and build hotels on, and also to grow trees and vegetables on.

Among the plants to be found on the Dal are the white lily, the *annesleya horrida* (called *juwur* by the local people), the delicious *singh  rh  * (horned water nut), the lotus (the roots of which are called the *nadroo* and constitute one of the few vegetarian dishes of Kashmir), the *kamal doda*, reeds and rushes (used for thatching the roofs of boats and for making sieves), and grass and floating leaves used as fodder for animals.

*Fauna:* Grebes, moor hens, ducks, swans and bald coots are often found near the lake. Herons and kingfishers have their favourite spots, away from the houseboats and shops. Eagles often swoop down to devour ducks. In autumn and winter you can expect to sight wild fowl instead.

**'Govt. [Government]' Central Market:** Almost all the shops in this market are privately run, except a few like the School of Designs and the trainees' goods shop of the Directorate of Handicrafts. The government merely owns the other shops. It has often tried to get the word "Government" removed from all signboards in this market, so that tourists do not assume that the government has approved the prices charged or even the quality of the goods sold.

However, the word springs up again and again, and not just in this market. Signboards on shops on islands inside the Dal Lake and on the Boulevard do the same. They have all been 'registered' as shops with the concerned department of the government. There is nothing great about being registered with the government. This is a legal requirement. But some signboards scream this fact, with 'GOVERNMENT' in huge letters and 'regd.' or 'registered' in tiny ones. So, please examine the signboards of such shops carefully in case you are the kind that makes purchases at government-run shops in the confidence that you won't get cheated.

**Hari Parbat Fort:** The earliest structures on the Hari Parbat hill were built between 1592 and 1598 AD by Akbar, Emperor of India. The walls surrounding the fortress date to this period. The fort itself was constructed by the Afgh  n governor of Kashmir, Ata Muhammad Kh  n, around 1770.



This hill, also known as the Koh-i-Marân, is some 250 feet higher than the plain. It is of trap formation and has been quite bare since at least the late 19th century. In 1786, the European traveller Forster wrote that it was covered with gardens and orchards. It is possible that it was the northern side of the hill that he wrote about, the side between the Chhati Padshahi gurudwara and the Nageen Lake. This side has traditionally been a badamwari (almond grove). Parts of it still are, though the rest has since been built upon. (See also 'The Culture of Kashmir: Festivals'.)

**Harwan excavations:** Sir Aurel Stein was of the opinion that the present village of Harwan is the Shadar-hadvana (the grove of the six saints) referred to by the mediaeval Kashmiri historian Kalhan in his *Rājatarāṅginī*.

It was in the first years of the 20th century that some moulded brick tiles were unearthed at Harwan, when the Dogrâ government started constructing the conduit of the Harwan water-supply scheme. However, it was only in the 1930s that archaeologists first excavated the place. A flat, square patch covered with grass, which stood amidst a rich cornfield, had intrigued them. Nothing grew on it except a stunted tree.

Excavations revealed a small township. Its buildings had been constructed in two distinct styles: a relatively primitive one, which archaeologists date to AD 300 and call the "pebble" style, and a more advanced one, which they call the "diaper pebble" style and date to the sixth century and later.

The discovery of a copper coin of the White Hun ruler Toramana (c. fifth century AD) under the foundations of the stupa helped date it to at least the sixth century, if not the fifth.

There are two major buildings in the diaper-rubble style: a "medium sized" stupa, of which the three-terraced base survives, and a set of rooms, which scholars like Kak assume must have served as chapels (or even dormitories).

Regarding the artworks at Harwan, archæologist Dr. B.R. Mani says, 'The [Takshashila] model remained the prototype which was followed by the artists of [Ushkara, Bâramullâ] and Harwan.'

Explaining why the Harwan excavations are such an exciting and important discovery, R.C. Kak writes, "Among the antiquities that this area yielded, were a large number of broken fingers and toes... belonging to images of the Buddha, ...and a few clay votive tablets bearing in relief miniature stupas. These last are extremely interesting, inasmuch as they give an idea of the kind of stupas that were built in Kashmir in the early centuries of the Christian era."

**Harwan lake:** This is an artificial reservoir, upto 30' deep. It was constructed by Mahârâjâ Pratap Singh as part of the waterworks of Srinagar City. The waters of Lake Tarsar flow down to the reservoir and are collected there, before being supplied to the city.



The catchment area of the reservoir is almost 150 square miles. The Dogrâ Mahârâjâs had banned the grazing of cattle and sheep in the entire catchment area, so that the water of the reservoir did not get contaminated. Srinagar was then prone to epidemics like cholera. Therefore, the Mahârâjâs' caution was well-advised.

A covered masonry canal runs from this lake to the Nishat reservoir, winding its way through the hills.

**Ishber:** This village is situated near the end of the causeway that crosses the Dal lake. Near it is a sacred spring called the Gufta (Gupt) Ganga, where a Hindu festival is held in the month of April. People bathe in the spring on that occasion. Apparently the village used to be called Aisha Brari and has been named after Isan, also known as Aishan Dave. (See 'Lord Jesus in Kashmir and Ladâkh'. In many Eastern languages, Jesus is called Eesa, which is uncannily similar to the Hindu 'Eesh' or 'Ish,' meaning God.)

**Kathi Darwaza:** This must have been the principal of the three gates of Akbar's walled city of Nâgar-Nagar, because it is here that the inscriptions are. Akbar's inscription says, "The foundation of the fort of Nâgar-Nagar was laid in the reign of the just sovereign, the king of kings, Akbar, unparalleled among the kings of the world, past or future. He sent one crore and ten lakh [rupees] from his treasury and two hundred Indian master-builders, all his servants. No one was forced to work without remuneration..."

**Khushhâl Sar:** "It is a lake situated in the northern parts of the city; on its eastern bank is situated Muhalla Jadibal, and on its western is the Idgah. Its circumference is about four miles. Around it grows the reed grass in abundance, half of which is used for manufacture of matting for the Jami [Jâmâ] Masjid and the other half for [religious] mooring places and the Khânqâh of Jadibal. In it there are plenty of birds of prey..." (Hassan)

Things have changed considerably since Hassan's time (mid 19th century). The Khushhâl Sar is still quite pretty. However, since the last decades of the 20th century, garbage has often been dumped in it. In the evenings it emits a foul smell. Aided by some NRI scientists, I tried to introduce into the lake enzymes which would neutralise the organisms that caused the stench. The experiment was a non-starter. Such enzymes work only in still, stagnant waters, and not in lakes that flow into a river. Secondly, the Jâmâ Masjid now has a tin roof.

The birds of prey are still there.

**Madeen Sâheb:** Syed Muhammad Madeen was the Persian Ambassador to Kashmir during the reign of Sultan Sikander. His tomb in Hawal (north of the mosque) was constructed during Budshah's reign. It once was one of the finest monuments in all Kashmir. The basic architecture survives. However, the brightly coloured glazed tiles that adorned its interiors are now



gone. Such tiles are a Central Asian tradition that I am trying to revive in Kashmir, so far without success. Today you can find them at very few places in India, for instance, the exterior of a mosque on Curzon Road, Delhi, and on the dome of a tomb near Hazrat Nizamuddin, also Delhi. I believe that the dome of Budshah's mother's tomb had glazed tiles on it.

Iqbal Ahmed writes that the colours used at Madeen Sâheb were mainly yellow, orange, blue, green, red and brown. He adds that the motifs used included 'graceful skulls glowing with floral patterns, sometimes interwoven with heads of animals, human representation and other neutral scenes.'

So how do we know that there were tiles in Madeen Sâheb's tomb? In the second half of the 20th century debris were removed from the tomb's outer chamber. Fragments of some such tiles were found there. They were taken to Srinagar's SPS Museum at Lal Mandi. As Ahmed notes, there are floral designs on most of these tiles. He adds, 'I was told by the in-charge of the gallery that there are [a] few such fragmentary pieces in [the] reserved collection, which when put in order make a picture of [a] turban headed horse rider.'

Madeen Sâheb used to wear a Persian turban of that kind.

(Iqbal Ahmed, 'Lost evidences of glazed tiles,' *Greater Kashmir*, 26 August, 2001.)

**Mazâr-e-Shora** (the graveyard of the poets) is near Dal Gate, towards Mal Taing.

**Mughal gardens:** Four 'gardens' in Srinagar qualify to be called Mughal gardens: the Shalimar, the Nishat, Cheshma Shahi and Pari Mahal. The Mughals also built the Naseem Bâgh but it is a grove, not a garden. Other Mughal gardens in Kashmir include the Dara Shikoh garden at Bijbehara, the Verinag and Achabal gardens and Jharokh Bal near the Mânasbal lake.

These gardens follow a standard pattern that is derived from ancient Persian paradise gardens, which were centered on water. All Mughal gardens are made up of a number of terraces, normally seven or nine, to represent the seven 'earths' (*zameen*) or nine 'skies' (*falak*). There is a water channel made of stone that runs from the highest level to the lowest, in the exact centre of the garden.

There normally is at least one bârâdarî (pavilion) on one of the upper terraces. (The best Mughal bârâdarîs in Kashmir generously used papier mache, especially on the ceilings. The colours of the papier mache have begun to fade after almost five hundred years, but much of the work is still intact).

Trees and shrubs are planted at appropriate intervals. Fountains dot the water channel. There are small, rectangular pools on most terraces. A balance is sought to be achieved between flowers, fruit trees, water, light and shade.



All Mughal gardens are surrounded by a brick-wall about ten feet high. The bricks used by the Mughals were the slim, tough, sun-baked Maharaji bricks made of mud. These are the bricks used in all of Kashmir's surviving heritage buildings. The outer walls of the Nishat and Shalimar have been repaired several times, at times with modern clay bricks, and on other occasions with stone. Not so with the repairs of the year 2000, when real Maharaji bricks, cannibalised from elsewhere in town, were used by my team of restorers.

There are stone-lined paths on both sides of the water channel. In the case of Kashmir the Mughals used either the very expensive and smooth, but long-lasting, Devri stone or the cheaper, rougher, slate-like Bâramullâ stone. Repairs carried out in the 1960s used cement wherever stone-tiles (or stone fountains) were missing. In 2001, I launched a small effort to replace cement tiles, one by one, with Devri stone. Replacing cement fountains with fountains made of stone is more difficult because sculptors who can work with the very hard Devri stone are not easily available. However, obviously that has to be the next step.

The Naseem Bâgh (the garden of gentle zephyrs), was planted by Emperor Akbar. It is, without a doubt, the finest Chinâr grove in Kashmir, if not the world, even though not all of Akbar's 1,200 trees might still be there. By the time the *Gazetteer* was compiled (1890) many of the trees had disappeared, though "the remains of surrounding walls, and a platform which appears to have been made on purpose for the reception of the trees, [were still] everywhere to be seen". It added, "The natives say that the Nasim [Bâgh] should be visited in the morning and the Nishat [gardens] in the evening." Summer evenings are filled with mosquitoes, though.

The masonry terraces built by Akbar, too, have disappeared. River Arrah/ Telibal and the Dal Lake meet nearby. There used to be an 'oil manufactory' at that junction till the 1950s. The Arrah can be navigated for about 3 km. and has good fish.

The University of Kashmir has been built around the Naseem Bâgh. Several of its departments are located within the Bâgh. They are housed in modest, single-storeyed barracks that in themselves are fairly inoffensive. However, Kashmir's best Chinâr grove should best have been left alone.

**Nishat Bâgh:** The Garden (Bâgh) of Bliss (Nishât) is commonly believed to have been constructed by Emperor Jehangir after his first visit to Kashmir. (The *Gazetteer* falls for this story.) The Nishat Bâgh is surrounded by a stone and brick wall that is 13 feet high on the front side.

This garden has several terraces, ten according to the *Gazetteer* of 1890, twelve according to Mrs. C.M. Villiers-Stuart (early 1900s), nine according to the Mughals themselves.



What is interesting, though, is that Mrs. Villiers-Stuart, writing her *Gardens of the Great Mughals* a few decades after the *Gazetteer*, found two terraces more than did the latter. She assumed that the Mughals had built each terrace for a sign of the zodiac.

The correct position is that Nishat has always had only nine terraces. The tenth and uppermost 'terrace' noticed by The *Gazetteer* was meant for the soldiers of the Mughal army. They either camped on this flat tract or used it for their horses or ammunition. Each of the nine terraces of the Nishat represents one of the nine falaks (lit. skies) of Islām (much like "cloud nine" of Christianity), while the seven terraces of Shalimar and Cheshmashahi represent the seven 'earths' (continents?) of Islām.

As with the other Mughal gardens, the number of terraces the garden has depends on (a) who is doing the counting and what he would count as a terrace; and (b) whether any of the Mughal terraces has since been replaced by a road (as has happened in this case). The Cheshmashahi garden was reduced in size well before the 20th century. Both the Nishat and the Shalimar used to go right down to the lake as recently as in the first decades of the twentieth century. The gardens were not as easily accessible to the common man then, and the way to get there was by shikara, as the Mahārājā used to do. Both gardens still have ghats for shikaras.

The Nishat is 650 yards long and 350 yards wide. The central channel is supposed to get its water from the Sharāb (liquor) Kuhl (channel), thus named because there used to be, before 1947, on its edge a brewery run by one Mr. Andersen. There is such little water in this kuhl that the government has, since the 1980s, been pumping water up from the lake to the uppermost terrace, so that it can then cascade downwards.

Noteworthy tricks of architecture in the Nishat, the *Gazetteer* notes, include the fact that "the avenue [along the canal] is so contrived as to appear much larger than it really is". It adds that the terraces allow for cascades to be "formed by inclined walls of masonry, which are covered with stone slabs, and beautifully scalloped to vary the appearance of the water". Also, the top three terraces are much higher than the other seven. Each of these three is 16 to 18 feet above the terrace immediately below.

For me the most impressive 'trick' of mediæval engineering is the chamber where water is squeezed under the pressure of gravity. This enables the water to gush upwards in the fountains below.

Mrs. Villiers-Stuart has an interesting tale to tell about how Asaf Khān's Garden of Gladness (as she calls it, for *nishat* can also be translated as 'gladness') came to belong to his son-in-law, the Emperor Shah Jehan.

Apparently Shah Jehan visited Kashmīr in 1633 and "decided that the garden was altogether too splendid for a subject, even though that subject



might happen to be his own prime minister and father-in-law. He told Asaf Khân on three occasions how much he admired his pleasure-ground, expecting that it would be immediately offered for the royal acceptance."

The hints were too broad for the Prime Minister to ignore.

**Pari Mahal:** The Pari Mahal (pari= fairy, the celestial kind ; mahal= palace), or the Palace of the Fairies is referred to as the Kutlun in some texts. Purist historians call it the Peer Mahal, or the Palace of the Mystics. The fact is that this place was no palace. It was, instead, an advanced seminary for Sufi mystics. This seven-terraced seminary-cum-library was ordered to be built for Akhoon Mulla Shah, by his pupil, the Mughal prince and heir-apparent Dara Shikoh.

Kak wrote, "Pari Mahal differs from other Kashmir gardens in that it does not possess any cascades or water chutes, though it seems probable that there were fountains in the tanks."

In 1999, some "technical experts" decided to 'repair' the outer walls of the Mahal by plastering them with cement. I blew my lid and protested. I was told that there was no reason for me to get so worked up because (a) they would later whitewash the cement a pretty pink indistinguishable from the original pink Mughal masonry, and (b) this is how Mughal monuments all over India were being preserved. Maybe I was being foolishly sentimental and perhaps cement is the only solution available. But I stuck it out till the cement was scraped out.

**Shalimar Bâgh:** Dr. Elmslie, a 19th century British scholar, believed that the name of this Mughal garden was derived from Marat-i-Shah Alam. The name was then shortened into Mar Shala. This, he felt, was inverted according to the genius of the Kashmiri language, and became Shala Mar, 'the habitation of the king of the world.' (Shâh= king; i= of; âlam= the world.)

The Shalimar Bâgh was constructed at the behest of the Mughal Emperor Jehangir, slightly to the north east of the Astawhol division of the Dal Lake. The garden is 600 yards long. Its width varies between 200 and 270 yards, making it slightly smaller than that other major Mughal garden, the Nishat. The Shalimar is built on seven terraces.

The stone used to line the canal and the tanks is polished limestone, which had been designed to resemble black marble. This garden, too, used to get its waters from a branch of the Arrah (pron.: â-râ) stream (also known as the Dachigam Nallah). The waters of the Arrah were diverted to the Harwan reservoir in the early 20th century. Since then a channel from the reservoir has been supplying water to the garden. Thus, while the source of water remains the same, the route has become somewhat more circuitous.



In the evenings the Shalimar is supposed to be the venue of the only guaranteed non-film entertainment in town, the bilingual (English/ Hindi-Urdu) *Son et Lumeire*, which seeks to recreate the history of the garden (and its times) through the medium of audio-drama. The show was suspended in 1990 following the changed law and order situation.

The earliest available European account of the garden is that of Bernier, who visited Srinagar in 1664, as a part of Aurangzeb's entourage.

**Sher-Garhi:** The Afghân governor Ameer Jawân Sher Qizilbash (aka Ameer Khân) is said to have built the Sher (=lion) Garhi (=fortress). The Sikh rulers used to call the place Narsingh-garh (Narsingh is a Hindu God, half-lion, half man.) The 1885 earthquake caused substantial damage to it.

Even in 1890, the *Gazetteer* noted that, "As a fortress, it does not possess any great strength, the outer walls being old and dilapidated; and from the amount of pine, timber and other inflammable substances, of which the interior buildings are constructed, it could not long withstand artillery fire."

The beautiful white, Greco-Roman, building on the left bank of the Jehlum was the summer palace of the 19th century Dogrâ king, Pratap Singh. In 1985, by when it had been converted into an office of the Government of Jammû and Kashmîr, the Gole Garh Palace portion succumbed to much less: to a careless spark that originated from within the office. The southern half of the palace still bears testimony to what once was.

**Son(a) Lank:** (Pron. 'sown lunk', rhymes with 'lone hunk'.) The Son(a) Lank (the Golden Island) is an artificial island in the Dal Lake. It was built by the Mughals, apparently to be one up on the Kashmiri King Zain-ul-Abidin, who had originally built the island. It is roughly 35m. square and, in the mid-19th century, used to host a jail, the ruins of which might still be seen.

"In the middle of the Large [section of the] Dal, opposite to Hazratbal, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin had built an island, Sona Lank, and a palace with three storeys on it, but it cracked in an earthquake. Then, the Mughal kings turned it into a pleasant scenery. [Afghân governor] Amir Khân made changes in it and caused the water to be drawn up the Chinâr with the help of a water-wheel and built a fountain in the courtyard of the building. He spent his time enjoying it. Today the building is desolate." (Hassan, mid-19th century)

Next to nothing of Ameer Khân's building survives.

**The SPS (Shri Pratap Singh) Museum** is located on the banks of the Jehlum opposite the Bund. The neighbourhood is better known as Lal Mandi. It is a small museum. And yet, the miniature paintings, manuscripts, sculptures, handicrafts and jamawar shawls on display are part of the best collection of its kind in Kashmîr.



**Tâleh Manzil:** This is one of the many Dogrâ palaces on Gupkar road, at its northernmost end. It has two names, 'Karan Mahal' in English and Hindi and 'Tâleh Manzil' in Urdu. Taleh Khân, the Nawab of Palampur (HP), owned it. The Mahârâjâ of Jammû and Kashmir purchased the palace from the Nawab. The Mahârâjâ's descendants continue to live in this pretty, medium-sized palace.

**Tourist Reception Centre:** The TRC is the nerve centre of all tourist activity in Srinagar, indeed all Kashmir. Regardless of how you reach Srinagar, you are bound to keep going past the TRC several times a day while in Srinagar. There are several important reasons why most tourists in Srinagar find it useful to know where the TRC is: (i) It is the city's most important terminus for inter-city buses to the major tourist destinations; (ii) it provides a host of services to tourists, including information, banking and police; (iii) to many tourists it is a lodestar, which they use to fix their bearings. There is (iv) a notice-board on which tourists often leave messages and even pin sealed envelopes on; (v) it is a moderately priced place to stay comfortably at, and (vi) it is supposed to have the only restaurant in town which serves the complete Kashmiri Wazwan. They also serve individual Wazwan dishes. However, since 2000 the complete Wazwan has rarely been served.

### Shrines

**Akhood Mulla Shah's Mosque:** Now in ruins, the mosque of Akhood Mulla Shah, is one of the most beautiful mosques in Kashmir. It is one of the three stone mosques of the Mughals (the Patther Masjid and the Hassanabad mosque being the other two). Baron Hugel, the 19th century explorer, said that this mosque deserved notice on account of the finely wrought black marble and stone lavished upon it. Its gates were carved out of a single stone "and polished like a mirror; but the wanton love of destruction has torn some out of their places, and others lie perishing on the earth."

It was built by the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh for his tutor Akhood Mulla Shah in AH 1059 (AD 1649).

**All Saints' Church:** This a small but pretty Protestant/ Anglican church near Srinagar Club. It was built in 1896 under the supervision of M. Nethersole, a retired Chief Engineer. Till 1947, the British Resident in Kashmir would be the president of the Church. The Srinagar Club and Nedou's Hotel had a close relationship with the Church and would post service timings on their notice boards. In 1979, Pakistan executed its former Prime Minister, Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The hangman was a Christian. This provoked mobs in Srinagar, who set the All Saints' Church on fire. It has been reconstructed since.



**Aishan Sâheb:** The shrine of Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi, an eminent scholar, poet and sufi saint, is on the left bank of River Jehlum, close to the 4th bridge. Sarfi belonged to the Kubrawia sub-sect of Sufism, in which he was trained at Khwarizm (Uzbekistan). It is believed that one day Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, visited the Sheikh in a dream and gave him the title 'Aishan Sâheb' because of his godliness. The Sheikh's annual urs is celebrated on the 12th day of the Hijri month of Ziqab. A few thousand people, mainly from the neighbouring localities, attend. They start praying in the evening and continue till midnight. The name of the saint is also pronounced Asian Sâheb (or Eshiyân Sâheb). His ziarat has a niche following, and is known mainly to its devotees.

**Aali Masjid:** Mîr Syed Muhammad Hamdâni bought a large chunk of land in the north of Srinagar City to create an Eidgah (an open ground where Eid prayers are offered and the Eid fair organised). Ali Shah, the Sultan of Kashmir, built the Aali Masjid (mosque) on the Idgah in AD 1398. In the 1990s a small part of the Idgah became a martyrs' graveyard. However, in normal times officially this historic Idgah is still used for Eid festivity twice a year. Hundreds of shops and foodstalls spring up on those occasions. On Baqr Eid (Eid ul Zuha/ Azha) thousands of sheep are sold here, for the ritual scarifice.

Historically, these grounds have also been used as pologrounds: Sultan Ali Shah Chak (16th century) died while playing polo here. Armies have camped here in peacetime, and battles have been fought on this Eidgâh during wars.

**Batamâloo Sâheb:** (Near the Civil Secretariat and Police Headquarters.) 'Bat' means 'rice' (and, at a remove, 'food') in Kashmiri. Sheikh Dawood, the saint after whom the shrine and the locality take their name, is better known as Batamaloo Sâheb. He probably had something to do with rice. Mâloo means father.

'Batt(a)' is the Kashmiri word for 'Kashmiri Pandit.' This community was much attached to the saint, who had a very large number of Kashmiri Pandit followers. It is possible that Batamaloo means 'the father of the Batt(a)s.' The 't' in 'bat' (rice) is soft. That in both 'Batamaloo' and 'Batt(a)' is hard. Therefore, the latter meaning is more likely.

The Sheikh was a disciple of Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom. The son of a poor farmer, he was a strict vegetarian, as his followers are required to be on certain days of the year. Legends of his piety and kind-heartedness abound. He would wash the hooves of his cattle and also the earth sticking to his ploughshares before either left the fields. This was done to ensure that 'dust from one place was not transferred to another.'



The Sheikh tilled his own lands. Every day he would take a large vessel filled with boiled rice to his fields. There he would serve the rice to everyone who happened to pass by. It could be because of this that Batnialoo might mean the 'father who feeds others with cooked rice'.

*The urs*: This is celebrated in the month of Chet (Chaitra). Attendances are very large. People come from the city as well as the sub-urbs.

**The Bat Mazâr** (bat, pron. butt= rice/ food; mazâr= tomb, shrine) is located where the canal enters the Astawhol division of the Dal Lake. It is known as the shrine where rice is eaten. "The boatmen going to, and coming from, the lake often stop there and cook their dinners. It is remarkable in the distance from its single chunar (sic) tree, and commands a good general view of the lake and the mountains around it." (The *Gazetteer*.)

**The Bulbul Lankar** is a small and decayed wooden building on the right bank of the Jehlum, about 200 metres below the Ali Kadal. It is said to be the first mosque built in Kashmir. It contains the ashes of Bulbul Shah, a saint, who is said to have introduced Islâm to Kashmir in AD 1320. The fact is that Muslims-and mosques-had existed in Kashmir for at least five hundred years before Bulbul Shah. The Lankar, thus, is the oldest *extant* Islâmic building in Kashmir, not the first. (See 'Islâm in Kashmir') The building that we see today is a 20th century reconstruction, effected with little regard for tradition, antiquity or the immense historical and religious importance of the place.

**Chhatti Padshahi (Gurudwara)**: This Gurudwara (Sikh temple), the most important in entire Kashmir, has an imposing modern marble exterior. It is located on the main road that goes to Hazratbal (and Ladâkh). It is also at the bottom of the Hari Parbat/ Koh-e-Maran hill on which Makhdoom Sâheb and the fort are. Entry is from just before the Kathi Darwaza.

On the left of the main hall is the room where the Sixth Guru of Sikhs, Guru Hargobind ji, received a cloak from an old Pandit woman who had worn her eyes out weaving the white cloak for him. The Guru shot an arrow into the ground and water gushed out. He took the water and sprinkled it on her eyes. Her eyesight was miraculously restored. Today, there is a well at the spot where the arrow had struck. Its water is sweet and is considered holy.

*Annual celebrations*: The birth anniversaries of Guru Nanak Dev ji and Guru Hargobind ji are celebrated on the 28th November and 4th June respectively. Major fairs are organised on these occasions. Scores of shops and foodstalls are set up for the occasion. Thousands of people attend the special prayers held on these two days. All of them are given free *karhâ prashâd* (a pudding), as is the Sikh custom. The Granth Sahib is recited for several hours on both occasions.



**Dastgîr Sâheb**, the saint: Pir Dastgîr and Kahnoav are among the many titles that the people gave Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilânî. 'Dast' means 'hand.' 'Dastgîr' means 'he who extends his hand [to help people].' 'Kahnoav' means 'he who has many names.' Jilân is close to Baghdâd in Iraq.

Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, once ascended to heaven for a brief visit. During the journey he rode on a holy horse called Burâq. This ascension is known as the Merâj Sharief and is as important to the Muslims as Moses' vision of the Burning Bush is to the Jews. Some Kashmiris believe that during the final lap of this ascension, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) rode on the soul of Dastgîr Sâheb-and not on Burâq. Could the legend about the 'final lap' be true? For one, it has no Qurânic sanction. Besides, Dastgîr Sâheb was born much after the Merâj Sharief ascension. However, votaries of the belief argue that Dastgîr Sâheb's soul had always existed in heaven.

*The shrine:* If you have never seen a Kashmiri mosque or shrine before, you might be intrigued by their Indo-Saracenic architecture. This style typifies many of the older mosques and Muslim-shrines of Srinagar in particular, and Kashmir in general. The dome, so characteristic of central Indian, Pakistani and Persian mosques, is a post-1950 import into Kashmir. Before that only the three stone-mosques of the Mughals had domes.

Among the important shrines of Kashmir, this is the most accessible and closest to the tourist circuit. It is located in the Khanyar neighbourhood, which is about a mile from the Dal Gate.

In the evenings the large windows of Dastgîr Sâheb are opened and one can look inside even from the road. The beautiful khatamband ceilings, the elaborate wood carvings, the grand chandeliers, and other finery are typical of the more affluent shrines of Kashmir. Many tourists don't even get out of their cars to take in the grandeur of the shrine's interiors.

*The relics:* The sacred relics of some of the most important figures of international Islâm are kept in this shrine. Its importance owes considerably to these relics.

Dastgîr Sâheb never visited Kashmir (or, indeed, South Asia). A traveller from Kabul brought one of his hair to Kashmir in AD 1802. Sardar Abdullah Khân, the then Governor of Kashmir, acquired it from him. The Sardar, in turn, gave this relic to a Kashmiri saint so that it could be periodically shown to devotees.

The urs is observed on the 11th day of Rabi-us-Sani, the 4th lunar month of the Hijri calendar. The hair of the saint, enclosed in an elegant vial-and-casket, is taken to the balcony of the shrine. A cleric then holds the relic aloft and shows it to the almost one lakh (one hundred thousand) people assembled. This display takes place on the main day of the urs as well as on the first Friday after the urs.



Festivity lasts for a fortnight, beginning on the 1st day of Rabi-us-Sani. Every morning and evening during this period, devotees gather at the shrine and chant religious verses and seek the blessings of Dastgîr Sâheb. Shops and stalls are set up on the entire road between Nowhatta and the Rainawari crossing.

Because the shrine is right next to the main road, the presence of tens of thousands of devotees at any given moment throws traffic out of gear. Therefore, vehicles are not allowed to ply on that road for several days and are diverted to an alternative route instead.

**Durgâ Nag temple:** This is a large temple complex located close to the Dal Gate. It is between the so-called UN (United Nations) office (UNMOGIP, actually) and Dal Rock/ Jan Bakers. It is one of the first landmarks that the visitor goes past on entering Srinagar by road from Jammû/ Pahalgâm while going towards the Dal Lake. Several categories of pilgrims stay in the temple's guest house.

**Kâli Asthâpan:** The oldest wing of this ancient temple was constructed in A.D. 79 by King Pravarsen II. The temple has been built on the right bank of the Jehlum below the 3rd bridge, which is close to the shrine of the Shah-e-Hamadan.

**Khwaja Habib Ullah Attar's shrine:** The Khwâjâ was a 17th century mystic of the Kubrawia order. He was an ethnic Kashmirî and belonged to the Gani clan. He came from a wealthy family of traders. He performed several miracles and had a substantial following. Mirza Kâmil Beigh was the most notable of his followers.

**Urs:** The Khwâjâ's urs is observed at his shrine on the 2nd and 3rd days of Rajab, a Hijri month. Devotees offer prayers on the occasion.

**Hasanabad:** The Hasanabad mosque, located on the lake, is a Shia mosque, said to have been built during Emperor Akbar's reign. The *Gazetteer* says, "[It] is one of the three mosques of hewn and polished stone which were erected at Srinagar in the time of the [Mughal -PD] emperors... An interesting cemetery is attached to it, and near it, on the south, is a pretty little wooden mosque recently [late 19th century-PD] built by the Sunnis [sic]."

The cemetery has tombstones which are works of calligraphic art in their own right.

**Holy Family Catholic Church:** A Catholic Mission was established in Srinagar in 1891. The Revs. Cunningham and Donsen, both of St. Joseph's FM Society, Mill Hill, London, were its founders. Franklin Wrinkley built the present Church a few years later, perhaps in 1900, on what was then known as the Hotel Road. The road has since been renamed Maulana Âzâd (or MA) Road. The Church was expanded in 1928 and 1932. Arora notes



that 'valuable donations' by local Christians as well as visitors 'helped to build a Presbytery in 1931.'

The **Jāmā Masjid** of Srinagar was first built by Sikander, king of Kashmir, who spent four years (AD 1398-1402) constructing it. It was founded at the behest of Mir Syed Muhammad Hamadāni, son of Syed Ali Hamadāni. The father and son dedicated their lives to the propagation of Islām. Sultan Sikander's son, Kashmir's most popular king, Zain-ul-Abedin (a.k.a. Budshah) enlarged it. He also added a generously endowed Islāmic school to it.

Most of the present structure was built in 1674-7, as many as three previous incarnations of the mosque having been burnt down by fire. Near the gate is an inscription which says that the mosque was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan. However, the mosque has undergone several modifications since then.

The 1674 fire must not have caused much damage, for this time the repairs (ordered by Shah Jehan's son, the Emperor Aurangzeb) took only three years, and Shah Jehan's inscription on stone survived. Aurangzeb, to his credit, ensured that the mosque was restored to Sikandar's original. Hence the mosque that we see today strictly adheres to the 14th century plan.

Except the roof, that is, The roof is now made of tin and not the burza bark (bhoj patra) that had adorned it for centuries. To make things worse, the tin is often painted in an unIslāmic and unKashmiri red. Equally often I kick up a ruckus to get the red paint removed.

The mosque measures around 120 yards by 120 yards. It is thus the largest mosque in the State. Some 372 octagonal pillars made of deodar support the roof. All the pillars are seamless and each has been made from the trunk of a single tree. As many as 32 of them are 90 tall.

The last king to rebuild some of the mosque was the Dogrā Mahārājā Pratap Singh. This author coordinated some important additions, made in 2003.

**Major congregation:** The biggest congregational prayer is on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramzan. There are huge congregations on the two annual Eids as well. There is a colourful, permanent (and illegal) market in front of the mosque that sells clothes, handicrafts and other items of daily use.

**Madni Sâheb:** The mosque of Syed Muhammad Madni Sâheb was constructed during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abedin. Glazed tiles were affixed on all its walls. Fine latticework on stone can still be found in the recesses of some of its walls.

Till the 1940s and '50s, the roofs of most middle-and upper-class homes would be covered with a bark known to Kashmir as *burza* and to the rest



of India as *bhoj patra*. So would the roofs of many mosques, shrines and important public buildings be. Madni Sâheb was one such mosque. Roofs (pash) constructed with bark would be called *burza pash*. (The roofs of the pavilions in the Mughal gardens and of some posh shrines are made of wooden shingle, painted an Islâmic green.)

Then in the 1980s and '90s, the tin-roof epidemic swept through Kashmir: town and country, rich and poor. Tin (or CGI-for corrugated iron) is easy to maintain, and inexpensive in the long run. Now, tin reflects light and heat. It blinds migratory birds, which prefer to bypass places with tin roofs, which now means all of Kashmir. The Valley is thus depriving itself of bird-droppings and other advantages that birds bring to agriculture and the ecological balance.

In the late 1960s, the Archaeology Department of the State undertook a major project to reinforce the roof of this mediæval mosque. They struck a balance between the convenience of tin and the traditional charm of *burza*. They removed the old *burza pash*, replaced it with a tin roof, covered the tin with wooden boards and placed *burza* on the boards. To all appearances it seemed that Madni Sâheb still had a *burza* roof.

**Makhdoom Sâheb:** This shrine, half-way up the Hari Parbat hillock, is one of the most venerable in Srinagar city. The inner sanctum has exquisite woodwork, embroidered cloth coverings and marble work. The chandeliers are of a mixed quality, though. There are two graves inside, that of Makhdoom Sâheb himself and of Bâbâ Dawood Khaqi.

After dusk, its lights can be seen for miles. They bestow a certain peace and serenity on those who, like this author, believe in such things. Even non-believers find the same lights charming from a distance, and majestic when they are close to the shrine.

Whenever there is a drought in Kashmir, devotees take vessels filled with water to the shrine and pray for rainfall. This act is called *muffal*.

*The saint:* Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom (AD 1394-1476) was a leading mystic of the Soharwardi order. His family were Chandra Vanshi Rajputs before their conversion to Islâm. He met with considerable ideological opposition from the then ruling Chak dynasty. The Chaks exiled him to a village called Beru, some 30 km. from Srinagar. He spent several years meditating at the Koh-e-Maran/ Hari Parbat hill.

*The shrine:* Nawab Inayat Ullali Khân, the Governor of Kashmir, built the shrine in A.D. 1713, close to where the saint would meditate. The shrine is half way up a tall hill. Therefore, there are two sets of steps, both made of expensive, chiselled stone. They are on either side of the shrine and go up from the Kâthi and Bâchhi Darwâzâ ends, both of which are at the road level.



*Festival/ urs:* The urs of Makhdoom Sâheb are a major event in Srinagar. Shops and stalls spring up everywhere between Khanyar and the shrine. It is a good marketing opportunity for shopkeepers. For rural folk it is a time to purchase utensils, pottery and other household goods.

**Mirza Kâmil Sâheb's** shrine is at the bottom of the Koh-e-Maran/ Hari Parbat hill. His grandfather, Malik Muhammad Khân, was the Mughal Emperor Jehangir's Governor of Kashmir. As a child Kamil Sâheb was very close to the Mughal Emperors. He was born in the palace of Jehangir's son and successor, Shah Jehan, who gave him his name. However, his spiritual guide gave him the title Mirza Akmal-ud-Din. Kâmil Sâheb proved to be an eminent poet, writer and saint.

The urs of the Mirza is observed on the 29th and 30th days of the Hijri month of Zilhaj. The gathering is medium-sized by Kashmiri standards. It is drawn mainly from the downtown. They recite verses from the Quran Sharief and poems in honour of Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, and Kamil Sâheb. Some shops are erected for the occasion.

**Naqshband Sâheb:** This is an important shrine, located amidst a large garden. It is on the road between Dastgîr Sâheb and the Jâmâ Masjid. The shrine is, thus, very close to all the important tourist attractions of the city. Part of its compound was converted into the Martyrs' Graveyard in 1931.

This mainly wooden shrine has some fine panels done in the *pinjra-kârî* style. Other parts are good example of Kashmiri woodwork.

*The saint:* Syed Baha-ud-Din Naqshband was a leading mystic of Bukhara (Uzbekistan). He founded the order of Sufi mystics that bears his name. There are only four major Sufi orders in the world. In this respect he was one of the half-dozen most influential Sufis of all times.

Kashmir and Afghânistan are the two major bastions of this order. Adherents of the order are, to a lesser extent, also to be found in Iran, Pakistan and other parts of India.

Naqshband Sâheb never visited Kashmir. However, one of his descendants Khwaja Moin-ud-Din did, and is buried close to the main shrine.

*Festival:* The urs of Naqshband Sâheb is observed on the 3rd day of the Hijri month of Rabi-ul-Awwal. This was the date on which he died.

People gather in large numbers at the main shrine and at the tomb of Khwaja Moin-ud-Din on the afternoon of the urs. They perform religious rituals and seek the blessings of Naqshband Sâheb.

**Naushehra:** This is a locality towards the northern end of the city. The shrine of Khwaja Habibullah Naushehri is one of its most important landmarks. The Khwaja was a leading saint, poet and musician of Kashmir. He was one of the best-known disciples of Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi. He belonged to and propagated the Kubrawia mystic order. *Fair:* His death anniversary, in the Hijri month of Zilbaj, is the occasion for a major fair.



**Patther Masjid**, the: (pron.: "pat-ther") Also called the No (=new) Masjid. This stone (=patther) mosque (=masjid) has a particularly hoary history. The mosque was built in 1623 by the Mughal Queen Noor Jehân. It was conceived in a manner that gave the impression that it was carved out of a single stone. However, a careless remark by the Queen angered the clergy. Pointing to the jewels on her slippers she is said to have told people that the mosque had cost her treasury "As much as these." The clergy then forbade the use of the mosque as a place of worship.

According to some scholars, the fact that the mosque had been constructed at a woman's behest had been enough to pique the clergy. My theory is that stone is too cold (and alien) a material to be used in a Kashmiri mosque. Therefore, this shrine was doomed from the start. (Muslim shrines in Kashmir were, till the middle of the twentieth century, almost invariably made of wood. This gives a feeling of cosiness in winter, late autumn and early spring.)

While the (Muslim) Afghâns ruled over Kashmir (1753-1819), the mosque was mostly used to store grains. This did not offend the local Muslims at all. Briefly (in 1792-93) during this period an attempt was made by the Afghân Governor Mir Hazar Khân to get people to pray at the mosque. A famine struck Kashmir soon after that and the people attributed it to the fact that they had offered prayers at an unconsecrated mosque. The building reverted back to being a granary.

The *Gazetteer* calls it "perhaps the most massive and substantial building in the city" and notes the "total absence of decoration".

Since the late-twentieth century, some people have been offering prayers at the mosque.

**Raghu Nath (or Rugh Nath) temple:** Arora, writing in 1940, called this 'the biggest temple of Hindus in Srinagar.' It is located between the 2nd and 3rd bridges on the left bank of the Jhelum. Four small temples surround the main temple.

**The Rishi Pir Fair** is organised in a modest temple near the fifth bridge (Kadal). It is in honour of Pir Pandit Pâdshâh, a leading saint of the Kashmiri Pandits. He was a disciple of Krishna Kar. He performed several miracles and was respected by both Muslims and Hindus. His was a message of tolerance and mutual co-operation.

The fair occurs in the Bikrami month of Baisakh in the third week of the corresponding lunar month.

**Rozabal:** The signboard outside this modest shrine reads "Ziarati Hazrati Youza Asouph and Syed Naseeruddin". This is supposed to be the Astân (shrine) of Lord Jesus Christ, if we are to believe a whole body of 19th and 20th century scholarship. Even if the identification of Hazrat-e-Youza with



Lord Jesus is far fetched, the fact is that all Kashmiris believe that this is the shrine (and grave) not of just any saint or Sufi but an important prophet. (See 'Christ in Kashmir and Ladakh': especially the section 'What do we know about H. Yuz Aasaf?')

Instead of seeking to cash in on the current interest in the subject, the keepers of the shrine have put up large notices (in English) denying that the shrine has anything to do with Lord Jesus.

Inside the shrine you will find, in the centre, the graves of Hazrat Youza Asouph and Syed Naseeruddin. By their side, carved in intaglio on grey rock tablets, are large stylized images of human feet. These are supposed to be Hazrat Youza's footprints. Not only do the 'footprints' look too contrived to be real, they are much too large. But then, so is the grave of the person who is said to have been Jesus.

**Shah-e-Hamadân, the Khânqâh of :** This exquisite shrine on the right bank of River Jehlum was first built around 1395. It was rebuilt several times thereafter. The present building dates to 1732. It is the oldest extant wooden structure in Srinagar and was once a symbol for the city.

*Architecture:* 'The Khânqâh [shrine] of the Mu'alla' is the most breathtaking Islâmic shrine in Kashmir: perhaps in the whole sub-continent. The brightly coloured papier mache, the intricate stone carvings, the coloured khatamband ceilings (khatamband ceilings elsewhere are normally wood-brown or white), the elegant Devri stone base, the minute woodwork and the array of chandeliers distinguish this shrine from all others.

*The saint:* Mir Syed Ali belonged to Hamadân, a town in Persia. He visited Kashmir three times. However, he is not buried in Srinagar. He died in Kafirstân in AD 1384 (which happens to be a particularly auspicious year in the Muslim calender: 786 Hijri). According to one source, he died in Pakhli, in the Hazârâ district of Pakistan. The shrine in Srinagar was built by the then Sultan around the room where the Shah's chilla khânâ (place of meditation) used to be. The Sultan was, in all probability, Sikander, though some say it was Sikander's father, Qutb-ud-din.

*The Hujra Khâs:* The room where the saint would meditate is now called the Hujra Khâs. It is in the north-western corner of the shrine. This room has a very special place in the hearts of most Kashmiri Muslims. This is partly so because the Shâh is the most important Muslim saint to have come to Kashmir from another land.

Some very important Islâmic relics are also on display in this room. The Shah brought them over to Kashmir. These include the banner of Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, as well as a thick wooden pole from the Holy Prophet's tent. It is said that whenever the Prophet sat in that tent, he would rest his back on this pole.



Whenever Kashmir faces a major natural disaster, these two relics are taken to the Eidgah, which is about three miles away. Thousands of devotees follow the relics. Prayers are then offered at the Eidgah. This goes on till dusk. Then the relics are taken back to the Khânqâh, again followed by a large number of devotees.

*The compound:* There is a small graveyard in the shrine's compound. It houses two Buddhist stone sculptures, each about three feet high and rooted to the ground. Maulvi Abdul Aziz of the Research Library, Srinagar, taught me, 'Look eastward, i.e. to the left. One of these sculptures is a Buddhist stone pagoda. This was the Chinkan Vihar. Chinkan was a vizier of Lallitaditya. He built one vihar each here and in Parihâsporâ. Khânqâh-e-Mu'alla was built on the site of the serai of King Qutubuddin. There are no old stones left in the Khânqâh-e-Mu'alla. The Pandits used all those stones to construct the bund (embankment).'

*Restrictions:* Women are not allowed in the graveyard. Neither women nor non-Muslims are allowed into the shrine. However, both Buddhist sculptures can be seen from the main road, through an open fence.

*Urs-e-Khatlân:* The Shah was not the first Muslim saint of Kashmir. Nor even was he the first to proselytise. However, it was because of his efforts that mass conversions to Islâm took place in Kashmir. The first *urs* of a Muslim saint to be observed in the Valley was his.

The *urs* of the Shah occurs on the 6th day of Zilhaj. However, festivities begin on the first day of that month. During the *dhambâli* people go into trances. Attendances are large.

Other major festive occasions at the shrine are the two Eids (Zuha and Fitr) and the Shab-e-Qadr. Apart from prayers these are also days of great festivity.

**Shankaracharya:** Most laymen believe that this hilltop temple got its present name from the great Hindu saint and reviver Adi Shankaracharya (788-820). There is little evidence to support this view. The name is probably derived from Shankarâ and Chachra, two kings who ruled in Kashmir in A.D. 954-6. The original name of the temple (or, as is more likely, another temple that had stood where the present structure does) was Jyeshtheshvar.

Cunningham (1854) and Cole, writing separately in the 19th century, subscribed to the local belief that the temple was built in the age of Jalaukâ (said to have lived around 22 BC). 'This theory has been rejected, firstly on architectural grounds, and secondly because of the doubtful character of the tradition', writes Kak.

There are Persian inscriptions still extant on the side walls, on the south-west column. These indicate the dates AD 1644 and 1659 respectively. At least the concerned columns/ walls were completed during the tolerant reign



of Shah Jehan. They were, perhaps, commenced by his father Jehangir, as the British historian James Fergusson [1910] believes. Another two Persian inscriptions are no longer in existence, though they were probably there even in the early 20th century.

Sober examination of the architectural evidence (comparing it with the Martand temples, for instance) tends to indicate that the temple was built around the seventh century A.D. Kak concurs with this view.

Kashmir was once known as the Bâgh-e-Suleiman. The hill atop which this temple is located has, since the 14th century, been called the Takht-e-Suleiman (the throne of Solomon). The Shah-e-Hamadân named it thus. It is likely that the Solomon in question was a noble, perhaps of Persian origin, who had held high office in the royal court of Kashmir, and not the Biblical Solomon.

## Downtown neighbourhoods

Downtown residential neighbourhoods of historical interest (not meant for the casual tourist):

**Malaratta:** The Syeds are known as 'mall-s' (pron. like the English 'mull') in Kashmir. In mediæval times there once was a violent conflict between the Syeds and the local people. The Syeds escaped to and sought refuge at the place now called Malaratta (lit. 'the fortress of the malls or Syeds'), where they built a boundary around their houses.

**Jamalatta:** The people of Jammû, especially its Rajput rulers, are known as Jamwâls (lit.: 'Jammû wallah' or 'of Jammû'). Hattâ means 'shop'. Jamalatta is a combination of Jamwal + hattâ. It means 'the shops of the Jammûite(s)'. In this case the Jammûites in question were the queen of Zain-ul-Abedin @ Budshah, who belonged to Jammû, and her entourage. Some shops sprang up near her palace, owned or run by people who had accompanied her from her native Jammû.

**Nowhatta:** Now= new; hattâ= shops/ market. Today the market and residential neighbourhood of this name is several centuries old. However, its name means 'the new shops' or 'the new market'.



## Srînagar District

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**Athwajan:** This village, close to the city, is known for stone-carvings of all kinds. Its temples and, within them the idols, are excellent examples of ancient Kashmîrî sculpture. In mediæval times the descendants of presumably the same clan of sculptors carved tombstones. The paths of old Athwajan were lined with stone. Much of that survives. The pillars and grinding stones of the village, too, are fine specimens of stone-work.

**Baltal:** c.9,000'. Baltal is 15 km. from Sonamarg, further north on the highway, in the direction of Ladâkh. It is at the feet of the dZoji La pass. When you drive from Sonamarg to the pass, there will be a major detour on the right. The quality of this road is quite indifferent. But it leads to what is best known as the 'roadhead' for the Amarnâth Yatra. This is where the motorable road comes to an end and from where you have to start walking up

The 'Baltal route' to the Holy Cave of Shri Amarnâthji is popular with young and physically fit pilgrims. You can possibly start from here very early in the morning, reach the Holy Cave in around seven hours and be back at Baltal late that night. It is a very stiff climb. On a rainy day the narrow path can be slushy and dangerous. Even when the weather is dry, the path sometimes caves in and becomes risky to walk on. However, a downhill journey on this path can be a delight and a thrill so long as it hasn't been raining.

**Burzahom/ Burzahama** is 24 km. from the heart of Srînagar city. Burzahom is located on a metalled, blacktopped country road that connects the highway (to Sonamarg-Ladâkh) with the Nishat and Shalimar gardens.

Travel from Hazratbal towards Sonamarg/ Leh. After a hundred metres or so the University campus will be on the left. Then the *mazâr* of Sher-e-Kashmîr Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah and Butt's Clermont will be on the right. Keep travelling. Another few hundred metres later the Foreshore Road



will branch off to the right. However, we continue to travel on the main road for another half a kilometre or so till we find another major road branching off from the highway and going right. Take this road. It leads back to Srinagar city: to the Mughal gardens. Almost half way through you will find a tiny sign, on the right hand side of the road, pointing to your left, i.e. towards Burzahom/ Burzahama. Turn left and travel for more than a kilometre, past a tiny village. The land on the left will now be substantially higher than the main road. A brief 'jeepable' path will take you to the higher level.

Around 2500 B.C. a civilisation, which knew grey and black burnished pottery and some architecture, used to flourish here. There are two groups of buried ruins that indicate this. This is one of the oldest archaeological sites in the state. However, it is meant strictly for those who care for history, not just pretty gardens and lakes, because what have been excavated are simple, ancient pit-houses and not spectacular urban architecture. A pit-house is a house *constructed* inside a pit. Which means that it is not just a pit. There are walls and other constructions.

The site is on the bed of an ancient lake. It consists of a number of pits, circular and rectangular. There are little holes around these pits into which poles must once have been inserted. The poles might have supported thatched or wooden roofs. The dwellers were hunters. A number of their implements, including chopper knives, needles and harpoons have been found.

These people would bury animals such as dogs, wolves and ibexes. Therefore, zoologists, too, have been looking at the site. The Zoological Survey of India estimates that human settlements existed at the site from 2000 B.C. to A.D. 400. Its report says, 'Burzahom... has different cultural phases from Neolithic to Early Historic. This is a pit dwelling site in India. From this collection, [zoologists] Banerjee and Ghosh described 12 species of animals. There were two different types of dogs. The remains of *Bos gaurus*. H. Smith [sic] is noteworthy as this is a new record from [sic] Kashmir from where they are extinct now. Huge remains of *Cervus elaphus hanglu* (Wagner) suggest that the site was once a favourite place of [a] large population of this species, which is becoming rare now-a-days. This is the only site from where a large number of Neolithic Bone Tools have been recovered.'

A stone slab found at Burzahom has the sketch of a stag-hunt engraved on it. It is similar in style to the engravings on a rock found at Nyurla (Ladakh). Besides, some stone harvesters and a double-ended pick were found at Burzahom. Similar tools have also been discovered at Karup (Tibet) and Yang Chow and Lung Shan (both in northern China). This shows that Kashmir, Ladakh, Tibet and China were in contact with one another even in neolithic times.



Radio-carbon dating has given a fairly precise date to this site: 2375 B.C.

Only cerebral tourists tend to visit this site. Others are advised to stay away. They'll be disappointed, though it is a vast, open area, with charming mountains in the distance.

**Dachigam National Park** is 21 km. from the heart of Srinagar town. However, over the years, it has almost become a part of the town itself. To get there, drive down the Boulevard. You will pass the Nishat, Shalimar and Harwan gardens, in that order, before you reach Dachigam. To enter you need permits, obtainable from the Chief Wildlife Warden at Srinagar's Tourist Reception Centre. (*see also* the chapter on Wildlife)

**Dodarhom** is just outside Srinagar town, between the Anchar Lake and Kheer Bhawâni/ Tullamula. It is around 18 km. from the town and on the banks of the Sind stream, near the bridge. There is a pleasant campsite under majestic Chinâr trees.

**Ganderbal** (5200') is 19 km. from Srinagar. It is located on the banks of the Indus river and is known for its big Chinâr trees. Traditionally it has been a popular camping site and, for those travelling by boat, a mooring site. The waters of the Baihoma spring are famous for their digestive powers. River Sind flows past the village.

*Traditional treks:* Ganderbal has traditionally been the base camp for treks/ visits to Manasbal, Kheer Bhawani and the Ashteng Hill. It can, in turn, be reached i) via Shadipur through River Jehlum; ii) via the now defunct Mar canal and iii) by road from Srinagar.

(*See also 'Salora' and 'Wutta, Lar' below.*)

**Gangabal Lake:** (3,570m./ c.12,000 feet). About 60 km. north of Srinagar, this lake is on the north-eastern slopes of the Haramukh mountain. It is a little more than 2 km long and around one kilometre wide. Its waters are not very clear or deep. Its beauty owes to its being at the foot of the Haramukh glacier and to what tourist literature calls 'its varied scenery'.

The lake is also called the Uttar Ganga, the Harmukhat and the Har Mukh Ganga. Sacred to the Hindus, it has a status among them that no other place in the higher mountains of Kashmir does. The ashes of the dead are immersed in the lake in September. It is believed that Goddess Parvati (Uma) had, at this spot, squeezed the Ganga out of her husband, Lord Shiv's top-knotted hair. The annual Hindu pilgrimage to the lake is on the 8<sup>th</sup> of Bhadra (roughly 20<sup>th</sup> August).

There are pretty wild flowers in the nearby meadow. There are several lakes, notably the Nund Kol (*see below*), around the Gangabal, which is in the centre. Parshu Ram, the great pre-historic saint, is believed to have meditated near these lakes.



This group of lakes includes the Lool Gul and the Andan Sar. Both are to the north of Gangabal and both are at around 13,500'.

To get to Gangabal you can drive up to the Nârâ Nâg (see below) ruins of Wangat after which you will have to trek uphill to the lake. (See also 'Trekking in Kashmir'.)

**Meru Vardhan** is just outside Srinagar city, off the highway, in the Badami Bâgh cantonment.

This is a tenth century Shiva temple, named after the minister who had built it. It is made of stone and is in good condition. The tenth century represents the last stage of ancient Kashmîrî architecture. New features had been added by then. Percy Brown notes, '(T)he horizontal moulding cutting across the upper angle of the high pitched pediment is omitted... The ceiling is also unusually attractive, as it consists of diagonally placed beams, with brackets, like dentils, supporting its outer framework, all very wooden in treatment, but on the other hand the general principles applied in this design are much the same as those in coffered ceilings of many Hindu temples.'

**Nârâ Nâg:** (Pron.: nâ-râ nâg) Little is known about the Nârâ Nâg ruins that are at the feet of the Butsher (Buteshwar) mountains.

The *Gazetteer* (1890) simply says, 'About 3 miles north of Wangat, at the head of the glen, far from human habitations, are some ruined temples. [A few huts have since come up there—PD.] They are situated ...in the midst of dense jungle... [Today, the jungle on the way to the ruins is no longer dense; but immediately after them, and on the opposite bank, it is still untouched.—PD.] In antiquity these ruins are supposed to rank next after those on the Takht-e-Sulimân [the hill of the Shankracharya temple, Srinagar-PD], at Bhûmjû [Bam Zoo, Ânañnâg-PD], and at Pa Yech [near Awantipore-PD]. They are in two groups, situated at a distance of a few hundred yards from each other, and consisting respectively of six and eleven distinct buildings. [Today, there is one big temple on a hillock where you will park your vehicle. Around two hundred metres away, at a lower level in a largish clearance, is the major group of temples, but certainly not eleven buildings. The river flows at a distance below.—PD] ... The architecture is of a slightly more advanced type than at Pa Yech, the most striking feature being the bold projection and lofty trefoiled arches of the lateral porches. ... It is probable that the Wangat [i.e. Nârâ Nâg] temples were erected at different times by ...pilgrims [returning from the Gangabal lake] as votive offerings after successful accomplishment of the hazardous ascent [to Gangabal]. Venomous serpents are said to be plentiful in this neighbourhood.'

These need not have been votive offerings, though. As we have seen, Gangabal occupies a unique position for the Kashmîrî Hindu. Could Nârâ Nâg not have been the starting point (or the culmination, or both) for the



pilgrimage to Gangabal? This is especially so because the pilgrimage to Gangabal is connected with post-funeral ceremonies. After all, Haridwar and the Sangam, both in central India, owe much of their importance to similar rites.

Other historians assert that Jalauk (c.200 B.C.), son of Emperor Ashok, was perhaps the first to build temples in this complex. There were three groups of buildings here. Over the centuries other kings added the other temples. Percy Brown identified one of the structures as the Jyeshthesa temple of Lalitaditya (A.D. 725-753).

Two of the groups were clearly temples. Of the third only the plinth remains. Percy Brown, quoted by Bakaya, calls it 'the most original achievement at Wangat... measuring about [120] feet long by [75] feet wide with a height of [10] feet and approached by a stairway... (A)long its sides are over thirty monolithic bases or piers at regular intervals'.

My theory is that this was a large hall (or pavilion) with open sides. Its roof was obviously supported by pillars. Because it was located next to a pilgrimage, it must have been where religious feasts were held. The guests would have sat on the ground in a quadrangle, as is still the Kashmiri tradition.

There is a pond, lined with stone since ancient times, which collects the waters of the Nârâ Nâg spring. It is just above the main complex. Its waters are warm in winter and cool in summer. This is the ancient Hindu pilgrimage of Sodara. It is believed that this is where Rishi Vashisht's ashram (hermitage) stood. King Sandimat, too, set up his ashram here after he renounced his kingdom.

Most importantly, Kalhan wrote the *Rājātaraṅginī* here.

There is also an intriguing stone structure at the entrance of this complex. It looks like a bath-tub for giants. It is eighteen feet long and 'cut out of one huge boulder'. Percy Brown calls this cistern 'a work of astonishingly patient skill and stupendous labour'.

The architecture of the temples, especially the pediments, seems to have been influenced by the Greeks. (The Ashok-Jalauk connection would explain this.)

*How to get there:* Travel on the highway that leads from Srinagar to Sonamarg-Leh. Turn left where the signboard says 'Wangat'. Nârâ Nâg is at the end of this side road, a 45 minute drive later.

**Nund Kol** is also called the Nandi Sar and the Kaladaka. It is 500 feet below, and to the east of, the Gangabal. 'Kala' is another name for Lord Shiva. Nandi is the Lord's faithful bull. This lake is supposed to be the place where the Lord and his bull lived together. Because the Harmukh mountain (16,872') towers over it, N.L. Bakaya calls the Nund Kol a 'blue carpet at the feet of the mighty Lord Hara'.



Nearby lakes include i) the Kola Sar, which is almost five kilometres away, and at a lower level. Because of the surrounding mountains little light reaches this lake; and ii) the shallow little Brahm Sar, between which and the Kola Sar is the rocky Hamsdar.

**Pandrethan** (lit.: 'the old capital city'): (6 km. from old Srinagar; on the outskirts of present Srinagar.) This used to be the capital of Kashmir till it shifted to present-day Srinagar. Today it is known mainly for its old temple. King Parth is believed to have built this 9' x 9' temple, around A.D. 921. Meru, his Chief Minister, dedicated it to Lord Shiv. Its sculpted top has Greek features. A tank surrounds the temple. The sculpted idols of the temple have, over the centuries, been eroded by wind and water. Their features are no longer visible clearly.

**Salora** (tehsil Ganderbal) (26 km. from Srinagar city): Qamar Sâheb, an eminent saint and scholar, was a Syed from Iraq. He migrated to Kashmir with Mir Muhammad Hamadani. He spent his last days and was buried in Salora (tehsil Ganderbal).

**Urs**: His *urs* is observed as a major festival in the month of Bhadon (on roughly the second Thursday and Friday of August). People travel all the way from Srinagar city, many of them in *doongas* (traditional houseboats). This colourful tradition is slowly giving way to more mundane ways. Most people now travel to Salora by bus or car.

Though the festival is held in a village, cityfolk have traditionally attended in very large numbers. Rural people come from all over Ganderbal and perform at various places near the shrine. Over a hundred thousand people come over from the various surrounding tehsils.

On Thursday evening trained singers perform. The people offer collective prayers on Friday afternoon. This is also an occasion for feasting. Celebrated cooks, too, hire *doongas*, where they set up shop. They serve those travelling to and from Salora by boat, as well those camping near the holy shrine.

The festival comes to an end after the Friday prayers.

**Sonamarg** (2,740 m.) is 84 km. north-east of Srinagar (i.e. in the direction of Ladâkh). Even though the road to Sonamarg is a national highway, its quality is extremely uneven in the last thirty kilometres. That is because the road is buried under snow for more than four months a year and is, hence, extremely difficult to maintain. Therefore, the journey from Srinagar will take much longer than the same distance elsewhere. Just under three hours by car is the norm.

'Son' (pron. 'sown') means gold. Thus, Sonamarg means 'the golden meadow'. According to a legend there is in Sonamarg a spring the waters of which can turn anything to gold. The place is a large meadow with very tall mountains on both sides. Dr. A. Neve, writing in the early 20th century, rated it the 'loveliest' place in all Kashmir.



The tallest mountain surrounding the Sonamarg valley has a peak at 5,300m. There are evergreens all the way up the mountain right behind the main tourist complex. A spur of the Thajawas range divides the valley. The trees that you see on the spur include pines, firs, silver birches and sycamore.

(In the main tourist complex, which is next to the highway, there are self-catering tourist huts, a tourist bungalow and a dormitory. Private as well as government-run restaurants, mostly mid-market, are also available.)

The Sind River drains the valley. In this case it originates in the glaciers of the Amarnâth range. (The Sind, known elsewhere as the Indus, has other sources, too.) Many kinds of fish, especially trout and mahaseer, can be found in the river.

Sonamarg is cold even at the peak of summer. Which is why it is Kashmir's fourth most popular tourist resort. The last ten kilometres of the highway to Sonamarg used to have magnificent ice bridges and snowfields on both sides of the road. The ice would be less than ten feet from the road. However, since 1998, there has been very little rain or snow and the heat has been higher than usual. As a result these ice fields and snow bridges have all disappeared, not only in Sonamarg, but also in the much higher dZoji La pass nearby. In 2003, some of them reappeared.

Most importantly, the *Thajawas Glacier* (4 km. from Sonamarg proper) suddenly shrank and receded uphill. It is still there but you have to climb much higher to reach it now. Apart from the accommodation at Sonamarg proper, there are a self-catering hut and a tourist bungalow a few kilometres before the base of the glacier. However, both went to seed because of disuse in the 1990s.

Thajawas is a side valley at the foot of the glacier. You might feel tempted to climb up the steep slope that leads from the base to the glacier. However, that won't be easy or safe. The rocks are brittle and loose. They keep falling off and coming downhill. If you must go up to the glacier, take the bridle path on the wooded Shakhdar hill instead. The hill is to the north east of Thajawas. The path will take you fairly close to the glacier, but not to the glacier itself. It is not at all safe for amateurs to walk on the Thajawas/Sonamarg glacier. So don't even consider doing that.

You can, instead, take a pony (or walk 90 minutes each way) all the way from the Sonamarg tourist complex to the base of the glacier. Or you can drive towards Thajawas and take a pony from the place where the road ends (or walk 45 minutes each way from that point). There normally is snow on the slope at the bottom of the glacier. The Gujjar tribals who own the pony will also arrange, for a small fee, wooden crates for you to sit and come hurtling down the slope in.



Sonamarg is the base for several treks, as will be seen in the chapter on 'Trekking in Kashmir'. The Thajawas spur mentioned there is in itself a good climb, with several camping sites, so long as you heed the notes of caution above.

*Getting there/ excursion:* Depart from Srinagar by bus or taxi. You can go through Srinagar town, past the Hazratbal shrine and the University campus. On a Sunday this is the best road to take because it is the shortest. On other days it is crowded.

Or you can go down the Boulevard to Nishat, turn left immediately after that Mughal Garden and take the Foreshore Road, which will join the road (highway) that comes from Hazratbal. The Foreshore Road is very rough. Recommended for weekdays, though.

Or go slightly further down the Boulevard and turn left at a major crossroad where there is a big tree at the intersection, and the road on the left is almost as wide as the one on the right. The road on the left will almost skim Burzahom before joining the road from Hazratbal. This route is the longest, but enables you to include Burzahom in your itinerary.

Past fields on the left and the Zaberwan range of mountains on the right, you will enter the Ganderbal area. 27 km. after Srinagar, you will cross the Sind (River Indus) by a charming, antiquated bridge, at Woyil. The valley will widen now. The road will mostly run along the banks of the Sind. You will pass Kangan and Gund. The snow-covered mountains that you will see are the Haramukh range. The wide valley will come to an end at Gagangir. For some distance the road will pass through a relatively narrow gorge, before entering a valley again. The road then starts going uphill to the Sonamarg valley.

Including the time you spend at the bottom of the Thajawas, you can easily return to Srinagar in eight or ten hours.

**Thajawas Glacier:** (Also spelt Thajiwas.) See 'Sonamarg' above.

**Wutta, Lar:** This is a village in Ganderbal tehsil. It is famous for the tomb of Shah Sadiq Qalander. Shah Sadiq was an eminent Naqshbandi scholar and saint. Qalanders are mystics who walk about and live in a semi-conscious trance. They can not respond to the people or the world around them the way that others can. Shah Sadiq reached this state after several years of meditation. In that altered condition he would do things forbidden in Islâm: he would drink alcohol, smoke opiates and shave off his beard.

In between Shah Sâheb would go through lucid intervals. During them he would live the Islâmic life. He would take part in Friday prayers, fast during Ramzan and recite the Holy Quran.



*Urs*: This is a major occasion celebrated by the people of the villages of Ganderbal tehsil. It takes place on the last day of Ziqad.

**Zakûrâ:** This is a suburb of Srinagar, just beyond Hazratbal and the University campus, on the road to Sonamarg-Leh. The shrine of Lâl Bâb Shah, a Muslim mystic, is its main attraction. Once a year an all-night dhambâli festival is held.



# 13

## The Pîr Pañjâl Range

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*The mountain range:* The Pîr Pañjâl is the outer range of the Himâlayâs. It towers between Kashmîr and Jammû and, indeed, between Kashmîr and the rest of India. It thus forms Kashmîr's southern boundary.

The northern slopes of the Pîr Pañjâl mountain range are in the Bârâmullâ and Ânañtnâg districts (both in Kashmîr). Its southern slopes are in the Poonch and Doda districts (both in Jammû province).

*Its layout:* At the lowest level of the range are plateaux with deep ravines. The level above them consists of forests. Then come the meadows. Above them are grassy slopes. The snow-covered mountain peaks are at the highest level. There sometimes are high-altitude lakes near the top. The best-known example of this kind of layout is the Gulmarg area, lake included.

*Peaks:* Its highest peak, the Tatakuti, is at 15,560 feet. Only two of its several passes are at below 13,000': the Banihal pass (2740m./c.9000') and the eponymous Pîr Pañjâl pass. Many of its peaks are covered with snow almost throughout the year. These include the Sunset Peak (near the Panjal Pass), the Tatakuti (near the middle of the range) and the Brahma Sukul (towards the south).

*Meadows:* Gulmarg is one of the many high-altitude meadows in the Pîr range. Other meadows include Kangwatan, Khilanmarg, Ludurmarg and Sangarwini.

*High-altitude lakes:* The two-mile long Kausar Nag lake (c.13,000'), the largest mountain lake in all Kashmîr, is also in the range. Also at altitudes between 12,000' and 14,000' are the Kontar Nag and the Gagri Nag.

*The name:* Stein says that the word Panjal is derived from the Sanskrit 'Pāñchâl'. The Kashmîris call it 'Pân(t)sâl', which means a halting place where water is provided to passengers. Vigne feels, probably incorrectly, that Panjal is a Persian word 'signifying a range of mountains'. There is the grave of a *peer* (saint) nearby from which the pass is said to get the first part of its name.



*The Pîr Pañjâl pass:* The Pîr Pañjâl pass is at 11,462 feet/ 3490m. in the Panjal range. The old Mughal road between Poshiana and the Aliabad Sarai went through it. Poshiana is a four-hour, 10 km. trek from the pass, towards the west. The path initially goes through pines and firs. The Sarai is eight gently sloping kilometres from the pass, to the north.

*Historical ruins:* The Mughals built two stone huts for passengers, the Chedikana and the Rasikund, on top of the pass. There are also the ruins of an octagonal stone tower at the summit. It is said that on a clear day one can see the minarets of Lahore, around 200 km. away, from the top of the pass.

*Geology:* Limestone in the pass contains marine fossils. Vigne found belemnites and small shells, reinforcing the 'Kashmîr was a great lake' theory. Pieces of hornblende can also be found. Capt. Montgomerie (19<sup>th</sup> century) noted that on the peaks of the Pîr Pañjâl 'the [atmospheric] electricity was so troublesome, even when there was no storm, that it was found necessary to carry a portable lightning-conductor for the protection of the theodolite'.

*Human settlements near the passes:* There are no villages near the passes. The summer camps of Bakerwâl shepherds are the only signs of human life at those heights.

*Best season:* The pass can be used by trekkers in mid-April and by horses around the first week of June. It closes around the end of December.

*The Aliabad Sarai* (9,700') is about 70-75 km. from Srînagar, a kilometre above Hastivanj and about 135 km. from Bhimber (Râjourî). It is on the Kashmîr side of the pass. Today the sarai is in ruins. Even when it was functional, i.e. till the Dogrâ era (early 20<sup>th</sup> century), travellers described the accommodation that it provided as 'bad' and 'stand(ing) alone in wild and dreary solitude.' In winter the sarai is snowed under.

While the Mughals built the Aliabad sarai, the place has since ancient times been used as a passage between Kashmîr and Râjourî (Jammû). Paths from here lead to Râjourî town past the Nandan Sar and the Darhal pass. The sadistic King Mihirkul (c. A.D. 528) is said to have taken a hundred elephants to a ridge near Hastivanj. He then made all the elephants fall off the cliff into the ravine below so that he could get to hear them cry out in pain. 'Hasti' is Sanskrit for 'elephant' and 'vanj' means 'to go'. Thus 'Hastivanj' means 'the place where the elephants went'.

*The Mughal Route:* That the Mughal Route terminated at Srînagar is the only thing that is certain. Where it began is a matter of personal choice. People say that it started at Agra, Delhi or Lahore, depending on their perspective. Similarly, travellers of that era sometimes took a detour through Poonch.



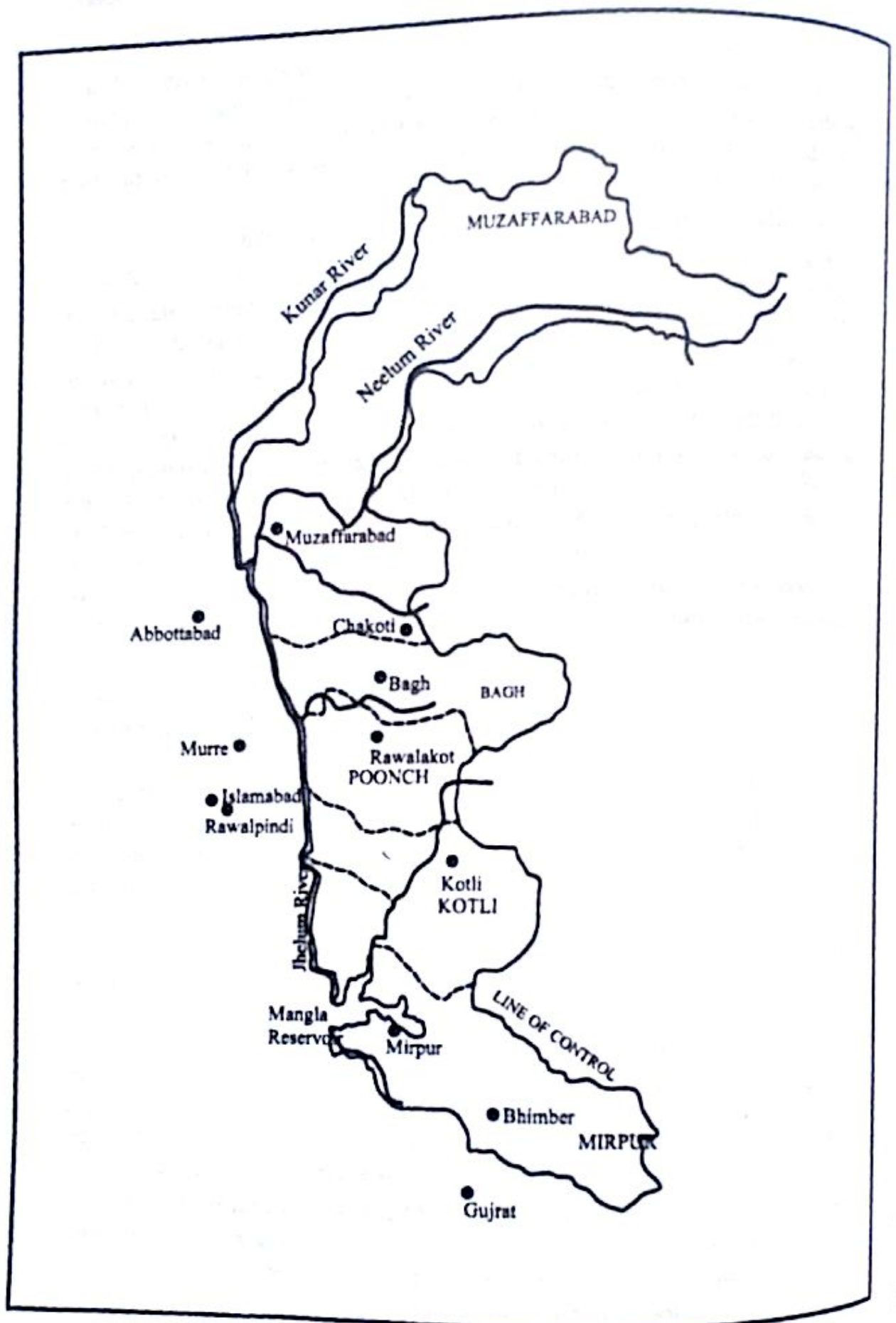
Today the route is identified almost entirely with the hills of Kashmîr and Jammû. This stretch began at Gujrat (now in Pakistan's Punjab), which is in the foothills. The first two stages pass through what is now POK. You will be in Jammû province till the 9<sup>th</sup> day. The Aliabad Sarai is the first major halt in Kashmîr.

*The Mughal Route in J&K looked somewhat like this:*

Day 1: (45km. from Gujrat to Bhimber, 1,060'), Day 2: (18km. to Sadabad, 2,010', through the Kâlî Dhâr range and the Adiana Gala, 2,986'), Day 3: (16km. to Naushera, 1,820', via the Kaman Gosha Gali, 2,999'), Day 4: (19km. to Chingus, 2,400') Day 5: (23km. to Râjourî, 3,030'), Day 6: (23km. to Thanna Mandi, 4,903'), Day 7: (18km. to Behram Galla, 6,050', via the Ratan Pir, 8,158'), Day 8: (14km. to Poshiana, 8,150', through the Suran valley and past waterfalls), Day 9: (20km. to the Aliabad Sarai, 9,700', through the Pîr Pañjâl pass, 11,462'), Day 10: (19km. to Hirpur/Hurapur, 7,600', past the Sokh Sarai), Day 11: (13km. to Shopian, 6,700'), Day 12: (26km. to Khampur, 5,520'), and Day 13: (21km. to Srînagar).

*Trekking:* See the chapters on 'Trekking' in this volume as well as the volume on 'Jammû.'





The Pakistan occupied areas of Kashmir and Jammu regions



## **‘Âzâd’ Jammû and Kashmîr**

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*The occupied parts of Jammû and Kashmîr:* The princely state of Jammû and Kashmîr was spread over 2,22,236 square kilometres (84,471 square miles). 45.62% of this (1,01,387 sq.km.) is actually administered by India. 78,114 sq. km. (35.15%) are under the occupation of Pākistân. Apart from this, Pākistân gifted 5,180 sq. km. (2.33%) to China. This was the Shaksgam area. China has also occupied 37,555 sq. km. (16.9%) of undefended territory in Aksai Chin (Ladâkh) on its own.

Pākistân has broken POK (Pākistân Occupied Kashmîr) up into two distinct units: the somewhat autonomous state of ‘Âzâd’ Jammû and Kashmîr (‘AJK’) and a federally-administered territory called the ‘Northern Areas’.

‘AJK’ consists of parts of the erstwhile Muzaffarâbâd district of Kashmîr, most of the erstwhile Mîrpur district of Jammû and some parts of the erstwhile Reasi district (mainly in the old Râjouri tehsil) of Jammû.

The ‘Northern Areas’ consist almost entirely of parts of the old Ladâkh district. They also include some parts of Astore and Bunji. The COK (China occupied Kashmîr) areas of Aksai Chin and Shaksgam, too, are parts of Ladâkh. For that reason, these three occupied areas have been covered in our volume on ‘Ladâkh.’

In this chapter we will only look at the tourist attractions of ‘Âzâd’ Jammû and Kashmîr: including some places in Mîrpur and Poonch, which were in the old Jammû province.

*Area:* The so-called ‘Âzâd’ Jammû and Kashmîr (‘AJK’) has an area of 5,134 square miles. This does not include what Pākistân calls the ‘Northern Areas’.

*Population:* 40,86,000 (1998)

*Ethnic groups:* Mongol, Tadjik, Kirghiz, Uighur (or Uygur), Yagis and others.



*Religion:* Mainly Muslim.

*Languages:* Dogri and Punjabi (significantly, there is no Kashmir  -speaking village either in 'AJK' or in the 'Northern Areas').

*Geography:* The scythe-(or crescent-) shaped 'AJK' now has four districts: Muzaffar  b  d, Poonch, Kotli and M  rpur. All four have forests and hills. M  rpur is its southernmost district and is in the plains. In turn, M  rpur is at the northern edge of (West) Punjab. 'AJK' runs northward through the outer foothills of the Him  layas. At its northern end are mountains, some of them 15,000' above the sea level.

'AJK' is 250 miles long. Its width varies between 10 and 40 miles.

Three major rivers drain 'AJK.' These are the Jehlum, the Neelum/ Kishan Ga  g   and the Poonch rivers. Each of the three creates a pretty valley.

The only way to travel within 'AJK' is by road. (The adventurous can try rafting on some of the rivers. The rich can bring their helicopters along.)

*Note:* There are several restrictions on international travellers who want to travel in 'AJK'.

### **Muzaffar  b  d town**

Muzaffar  b  d (2,250') is located in a green valley, where the Rivers Jehlum and Neelum/ Kishan Ga  g   meet. The old town is above the left bank of the Neelum/ Kishan Ga  g  . There are tree-lined mountains all around. Almost every writer who has visited Muzaffar  b  d town has remarked that it 'looks like a walled town' because of the mountains that surround it.

The town itself is not a tourist attraction. The country around it is hilly, full of stones and not very good for cultivation. On the other hand it has always been fairly prosperous. Food and supplies have always been abundant.

Muzaffar  b  d town is and has traditionally been a staging post for travellers bound for the fascinating valleys of the Jehlum and the Neelum/ Kishan Ga  g  . Its travellers' bungalow, on the river bank below the main town, dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This used to be a very small town till even the 1950s. In the 1940s, GMD Sufi notes, it had a population of all of 4,246. Once it became a capital it grew enormously. By the year 2000, the city had a population of around 1,00,000.

*Location:* Muzaffar  b  d town is 187 km. from S  rinagar, 140 km. from Uri (both in India) and 138 km. from Isl  mabad-Rawalpindi (P  kist  n). In its north are K  gh  n and Gilgit (both in POK). The Valley of Kashmir and the Jamm   district of Poonch (both in India) surround it in the south and east. In the west are M  nsehr   (roughly 70 km.) and Abbot  b  d (79 km.).



*History:* Sultan Muzaffar Khân founded Muzaffarâbâd in 1662. He was the chief of the illustrious Bamba tribe of warriors. The Muzaffarâbâd area (along with Bâramullâ, Râjourî, Poonch and Budil) has always been one of the preferred recruiting grounds for the armies of the sultans and mahârâjâs (Dogrâ as well as Sikh) of the state. The people of these areas were supposed to be good soldiers and of the so-called martial stock. The Poonch area (including Râwlâkot, Palandri and Bâgh) and Kotli tehsil contributed as many as eighty thousand men to the British Indian Army during the Second World War. This must easily be the highest proportion of soldiers to the rest of the population in any part of undivided India, especially considering what a small population this area had.

Because of these very martial qualities, Muzaffarâbâd could never be a paradise of the kind that the main Valley of Kashmîr was. Even till 1989, the year that externally-instigated militancy began in Kashmîr, the Valley was singularly devoid of crime. Lawrence noted almost a century before, 'Kashmîr is happily very free from crime, and one gaol, in Srînagar, is sufficient for the valley. In the year 1891-92, which may be taken as a year of normal conditions, 243 convicts were admitted to gaol, and of these some were not inhabitants of the valley, but came from the Muzaffarâbâd district.'

Marauders from Muzaffarâbâd (like those from Poonch) would often sweep into Kashmîr and plunder the harvest, historian Mushtaq A. Kaw points out. At times such attacks had official sanction. The French historian Jacquemont noted that Râjâ Zabardast Khân of Muzaffarâbâd joined hands with Syed Ahmed 'Shâhid' of Afghânistân in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the two kept 'threatening' Kashmîr. However, Jacquemont added, Prince Sher Singh, a son of Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh, 'gave them battle near Muzaffarâbâd in which [Shâhid] and his whole army perished.'

Zabardast Khân was the son of King Hassan Ali Khân. Some view him as 'the symbol of Muslim resistance against the occupation of Muzaffarâbâd by Sikhs'.

The Sikhs appointed Shaikh Ghulam Mohiuddin the Governor of Kashmîr (1841-45). During his tenure the Bambâs of Muzaffarâbâd and Karnâh teamed up under Sher Ahmed. A very bitter and bloody episode in the history of Kashmîr followed.

The town and the area have had a tumultuous history. Under Sultan Muzaffar Khân and his immediate successors, for several generations the town was the capital of an independent State. The Dogrâs made it one of the four district headquarters of Kashmîr. In 1947, Pâkistânî forces wrested the town from the Dogrâ Mahârâjâ. It was later made the capital of the *state* that Pâkistân calls Âzâd Jammû and Kashmîr. (I have italicised the word



'state' because at one level the fiction is that this is an 'Āzād' [independent] country. And yet in all official Pākistāni literature (and maps) it is shown and referred to as yet another state of that country.)

### Getting there

*From Srinagar*: There's a fairly good, 187 km., Dogrā-era highway between Srinagar and Muzaffarābād. It runs for 126 km. through the part of the state actually administered by India till it reaches Chakothī, which is the first town in POK. The best thing about this highway is that it does not go through any pass. Most of the time it is in the plains, and there rarely are hills next to it. As a result the road remains open throughout the year and is not prone to landslides. Nor does it get 'snowed under.' (See Route ii-c in the 'Appendix' for the first 107 km. of this route.)

*The flight from Islāmabad (Pākistān)*: Because of the shape of the valley, only small aircraft can land at the Muzaffarābād airport, and that after spiralling down in descending circles to lose altitude. Because these are small aircraft, they fly from Islāmabad to Muzaffarābād at a low height. As a result passengers can get to see the sights en route, especially mountaintops, from quite close.

*The Domail*: As in the rest of the state, 'domail' means 'where the two [rivers or roads] meet.' The Rivers Neelum (Kishan Gaṅgā) and Jehlum merge at the Domail, around two kilometres before (and south of) Muzaffarābād town, to become the mighty Jehlum. Regardless of whether you drive up from Islāmabad or from the Muzaffarābād airport, you will see this fascinating merger just before you enter the city.

At this point the Municipal Corporation of Muzaffarābād has put up a helpful sign board, in English and Urdu, 'Guide Map of Muzaffarābād city' which tells the visitor about the history of the town.

*Accommodation*: Apart from fairly good hotels, there are rest houses and guest houses in town.

*Handicrafts*: Kashmīri shawls, walnut carvings and handmade carpets are made and sold in Muzaffarābād.

### Tourist Attractions near the capital

*River Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgā*: This river is around 180 miles (275 km.) long. However, it is navigable only near Muzaffarābād town. There has been a ferry across the river at Muzaffarābād for hundreds of years now. In the nineteenth century (if not before) there was a rope suspension bridge across the river near Muzaffarābād, just above the fort. It was one of the few bridges over the river in that era.



*The fort of Plate:* This Mughal-era fort is the town's main attraction. It is on a hillock on the left bank of River Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgâ and provides a panoramic view of the river and parts of Muzaffarâbâd city.

*The fort at Narochhi:* General Hari Singh Nalwâ of the Sikhs' army built this fort.

*Shaheed Gali* (4,500', 16 km, from the town) is a pretty hill resort nearby. It is considerably cooler than the town.

*Peer Chinassi* (9,000'/ 2,900m) is in a different league altogether. It is high in the mountains, very cold in winter and cold even at the peak of summer. Its attractions include the much-respected *mazâr* (shrine) of the Sufi saint Hazrat Shâh Hussain. Many people prefer to walk up from Muzaffarâbâd town to this hill station, which is a 45 minute drive from the town. Either way, the way up is from behind the Secretariat. A road in the east winds its way upward from there. Peer Chinassi is perched above the Jehlum valley. In the north you will be able to see the mountains above the Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgâ.

*Pattika* (17 km from the city) is a pretty village at a slight distance from the Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgâ. It is 3 km. east of Nûrserai on the road to Pañchgrâñ. It has a bird sanctuary and trout fish farms. Rice and some cotton grow here.

*Makra mountain* (3,890m.) This is a comfortable trek from Muzaffarâbâd town. (3-4 days return.) To get there, drive (or walk) by the Red Fort and cross River Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgâ at Ghorî. The track then goes on to meet Shogran (Kâghân Valley). You can see Makra from Muzaffarâbâd town and vice versa.

*The upper Jehlum valley:* This is a scenic day trip from the town. Take the road that goes under the Domail bridge. This used to be the Dogrâ-road to Srinagar. The Jehlum flows along the road. Essentially we will be travelling upstream. Roughly 10 km. after you leave the town, the Jehlum will expand and become a small lake. The lake was formed towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when a landslide blocked the river, damming it up. The Tourism Department has built an Anglers' Hut here. Reservations for the Hut should be made in advance at Muzaffarâbâd. Boats ply on the river at several places.

*Official buildings in Muzaffarâbâd town:* These include the Supreme and High Courts of 'AJK,' the Legislative Assembly Building, the secretariats of the President and Prime Minister of 'AJK,' the State Bank Building, a hospital, a university and colleges. Like their mediæval precursors, many of the most important modern official buildings have been built on the banks of the Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgâ.



*The Muzaffarâbâd fort:* The (Pâkistâni) sources that I have consulted trace the origin of this red fort to the protracted battles that were fought between the armies of the Mughals (rulers of most of South Asia) and the Chaks (rulers of Kashmir). Apparently the Chaks built this fort to defend Muzaffarâbâd against the Mughals. These sources say that the Chaks started constructing the fort in 1549. The problem is that the conflict between the Chaks and the Mughals took place in the 1580s. The Chaks were not even in power in 1549. (See 'History...') If this is indeed a Chak fort (and the evidence is that it is; the dates must be wrong), it might be the only surviving monument built by that dynasty anywhere in all of the state.

In any case it was Sultan Muzaffar Khân who, in 1646, completed the fort. However, by then the fort was of no use to anyone. The Mughals had taken over all of Kashmir. There was nothing left to defend, and no one to attack.

The Afghâns (1752-1819) were the first to really use the fort. So did the Dogrâs, who stationed their troops here. The fort owes its present size to the Dogrâ Mahârâjâs, Gulab Singh and Ranbir Singh. They enlarged it and also carried out substantial repairs. After the Dogrâs left in 1947, once again the fort fell into disuse and started deteriorating. The old *serai* outside the fort is completely gone. The wide steps on the northern side, which would once lead down to the river, have been eroded considerably.

And yet, what remains is testimony to the farsightedness of the fort's builders. River Neelum/ Kishan Gañgâ surrounds the fort on three sides. The fort's architects studied the pattern of flooding that the river is prone to, and gave the fort's eastern walls protection of a kind that lasts to this day.

### Other tourist attractions of 'AJK'

**Athmaqâm:** This is a charming little town with two-storey log-cabins of the old-style. The rest house is built on a slope overlooking the river. Above it is the Western hilltop, which leads to Balakot (in Pâkistân's North West Frontier Province).

The road from Athmaqâm to Muzaffarâbâd is fairly decent. There is a daily bus service between the two.

**Bâgh:** This 'border' town is 20 miles (32 km.) from the Hâjî Pir pass, which links the areas occupied by Pâkistân with those administered by India. It is located at the confluence of two perennial streams, the Malwan(i) and the Râm Kot (renamed Mall). You can travel from the town to the pass on a metalled road. After 1947, the town was upgraded to a tehsil (sub-district) headquarters of occupied Poonch.



Bāgh is prosperous and has more than 5,000 shops. The town has a population of more than 3,00,000. It used to be a halting place on the old path from Poonch town to Murree (Marī).

*Where to stay:* The best places are the Forest Rest House and the P.W.D. dak bungalow. Tourists can stay there with the permission of the respective departments, whose offices are close at hand.

**Bāghsar:** The six-kilometre long, clear-water Lake Bāghsar is located on the old Mughal road to Kashmīr. It is in the Samhāni valley of Mirpur district. A fine Mughal garden has been built near the lake. Orchards surround the garden. So do wild laburnums.

The Mughals built a stately four-storey, granite fort on a hill above the lake. This huge fort is in an excellent condition despite the lapse of almost five hundred years. Later rulers, notably Ahmed Shah Abdali, Ranjit Singh and Gulab Singh, too, have used it.

Baghsar is around 60 km. (40 miles) from Gujrāt (in Pākistāni Punjāb), by way of Bhimber.

**Bhateeka:** This is the first town that you will pass on your way to the Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgā valley. Most tourists stop here for a while—often for the night—before proceeding further into the valley. This prosperous town is spread over a large area and has a small marketplace. The foamy Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgā runs nearby. The old bridge between the residential area and the marketplace can be crossed only by jeep.

Streams, waterfalls and greenery are the main attractions of this town, which is calm and unhurried despite its prosperity. That is because much of the town's wealth has been created not by industry or commerce but by remittances sent by its citizens working in the Middle East. Bhateeka's serenity is enhanced by the pleasant scent of menthol that fills the air, rising from the shrubs that line the stream.

A hydel (hydro-electric) station has been built on a tributary of the Bhateeka stream.

*Getting there:* The road is metalled till Kundal Shahi and fairly good till it reaches Kel. There are roads out of Bhateeka to the villages and areas around it.

**Chināry:** (40 miles/ 64 km. from Muzaffarābād; 16 km. from the line of control.) This charming town is known for the diversity and abundance of its fruits (notably apples, apricots and walnuts) and honey. The Dogrā Mahārājās built an elegant Rest House just above the Bazaar. This splendidly located heritage building is one of the town's attractions. Pākistānis go there to look at the areas on the Indian side of the line of control. (Indians do the same at several places along the border and line of control.)



**Dhirkot:** (6,000') This is a small town in the mountains. It is known for its cool climate, forests of deodar, pine and oak, orchards of apple and apricot, and mountain landscape. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was known as a health resort.

*Where to stay:* The government Dak Bungalow is located amidst a dense forest at 5,500'. It is the best place in town to stay at.

*How to get there:* At present the best way to get there is from Rawalpindi, past Murree and the Kohâlâ Bridge. One has to cross this bridge over River Jehlum to get to most places in 'AJK', not just Dhirkot.

**Jangwan:** This anglers' favourite is located where the rivers Jehlum and Poonch meet. It is 16 km. (10 miles) west of Mirpur, where the jeep road comes to an end,

**Kairan:** This is a pretty little town near the banks of River Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgâ. A publication of the Pākistāni government says, 'The physical feature of Kairan resort resembles a broad forehead of a person with thick hair on the head.' The rest house is above the western bank of the river.

**Kundal Shahi:** Kundal Shahi is a wooded halting place on the road that leads into the Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgâ valley. The air out here is filled with the exciting, masculine smell of fresh timber. The forests around it are so thickly wooded that not a ray of sun could enter. Well, almost. Let us hope they remain that way.

The 'Âzâd' Kashmîr Logging and Saw Mills set up their headquarters here because of the abundance of trees all around. This corporation supplies timber to all of Pākistān. Because of the logging activity, a small commercial centre has developed in the town. The Mills have a pretty rest house close to the western bank of River Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgâ, near the metalled road.

A side-road from Kundal Shahi leads to the Jagra Nullah. The government has established a 'tourist range' there. The Nallah is a clear-water stream with some trout. The road to the range is 'jeepable.'

**Rawalakot:** (6,000') is a valley with low hills all around. It is smack in the middle of the occupied part of Poonch district. At present the best way to get there is from Rawalpindi (by way of Kohâlâ and 'Âzâd' Pattan). The road is fairly good.

### **The Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgâ Valley**

*The name:* In India, too, we are under pressure to give Hîndû names to places that have Islâmic names. However, the government has resisted all such pressures, notably for Ahmedabad, Ahmednagar and Allahabad. Indeed, India has laws that forbid the changing of the names of places (and rivers) if the change is sought because the name is non-Hîndû. Unfortunately, Pākistān does not believe in such things. They have given the Kishan Gaṅgâ



river and valley the name 'Neelum' (also spelt Neelam). Earlier in this chapter we saw that they have renamed Ramkot as well.

The original name meant 'the Ganges [river] of the Hīndū deity Śrī Kṛishn.' The new one means 'sapphire.' The colour of the river is indigo blue. Perhaps its colour inspired the name. We in the parts actually administered by India still call the valley and the river by the name Kishan Gaṅgā. In 'AJK' and Pākistān they call both by the name Neelum. I have used the formulation 'Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgā' to refer to the portion in 'AJK'.

*The valley:* The crescent-shaped Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgā Valley lies on both sides of River Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgā. It is just under 90 miles (144 km.) long and takes its shape from the serpentine river of the same name. River Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgā pours itself into River Jehlum at Domail, near Muzaffarābād town. This merger of two great rivers is an awesome sight.

The valley begins just north of Muzaffarābād town and continues southward for almost 144 km. Its lower reaches are at 2,000' (600m.) and its taller hills go up to 8,000' (2425 m.).

Botanists call this generously endowed area a 'kingdom of vegetation.' Its forests consist of pine, fir, wild walnut, deodar and other tall trees. It also abounds in flowering trees and plants, especially strawberry and medicinal herbs. Tao Butt is the place where you are most likely to see this incredible variety of plants. The Shunder Hill area is the next best.

The valley has a number of springs and waterfalls.

*How to get there:* At present there are two routes to the valley.

i) From Kāghān Valley: There are, in turn, two popular approaches from haunting Kāghān. a) Through the Nuri Nari Hali pass; and b) through the Ratti Gali pass. In addition, a number of minor passes, too, link the two valleys. The Dawarian-Dharian-Neelum/ Kishan Gaṅgā route can be done on foot (or hoof) in two days. You will have to spend the night at Dharian (12,000'/ 3,640 m.).

ii) From Muzaffarābād: A 55 mile/ 88 km., fair-weather jeep road connects the two. From the city one travels 17 km. to the Pattika forest. Nosari is another 14 miles/ 22 km. ahead. Next on the road are Chaliana (height 3,200'/ 970 m), Qazi Nag, Barian, Salkhela, Kundal Shahi and Athmaqām.

Scary looking rope-bridges have been built across rivers and streams at various places. This is a Himālayan tradition that stretches from Kashmīr and Ladākh in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east. (See for instance the chapter on 'Doda/ Kishtwār' in the 'Jammū' volume.)



In theory, 'AJK' is quite autonomous. It has its own Prime Minister, Supreme Court and Public Service Commission. However, in practice, the Prime Minister does not have the power to transfer even an officer as junior as a Tehsildar, leave alone senior officers. This power vests in the Islâmâbâd (Pâkistan)-based Ministry of Kashmir Affairs alone.

Legally speaking in 'AJK' there are roughly fifty-two subjects that belong to the 'state list.' In other words, there are fifty-two areas of governance, on which the Government of 'AJK' theoretically has the power to act without consulting Pakistan. In practice, the Prime Minister of 'AJK' can act independently or legislate only on four of these subjects.

Outsiders are not allowed to purchase land, or seek permanent government employment, in any part of the Mahârâjâ's Jammû and Kashmir, as it stood on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947. In the Indian state of Jammû and Kashmir this still holds goods. On the other hand, certain categories of government servants from Pakistan have the right to purchase land in the occupied parts of the state.

The most telling comment on the state of the economy of 'AJK' and the so-called 'Northern Areas' of the state is that most of the domestic servants and tea-stall waiters of Islâmâbâd-Râwalpiñdî belong to these two regions. The Indian state of Jammû and Kashmir, on the other hand, is, despite a decade and a half of militancy, a net importer of labour from Central India.

*(For more about places in 'AJK,' please also see the chapter 'From Srînagar to Muzaffarâbâd.' The section on 'People' has a chapter on the Khakhâs, Bambâs and Hatmâls.)*

### References

- i. *The Kashmir Gazetteer* by Walter R. Lawrence, p. 227 (1890s; reprinted 1999. Shubhi Publication, FK-30, Shastri Nagar, Delhi.)
- ii. *Kashîr* by GMD Sufi, page 733.
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## **Culture**



1911

1912

1913

1914



# 15

## Kashmîrî Handicrafts: and how to purchase them

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### Basket-work

(See 'Wicker-work' below.)

### Carpets

*History:* Legends abound about how the world has been in awe of Kashmîrî carpets. Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh of Punjab so fell in love with one that he is said to have found pleasure in rolling on it. I can vouch for a true, 21<sup>st</sup> century story: We have in the J&K Government Arts Emporium a brilliant 15' x 18' carpet that has been around the world at least twice, looking for a customer. Of the few who could afford it, most found it too big to fit their houses.

Carpet making was brought to Kashmîr from Samarqand by the much loved 15<sup>th</sup> century Kashmîrî emperor, Zain-ul-Abedin (aka Budshah). However, after a while, perhaps because there weren't enough rich buyers, the craft died out.

Akhund Rahnuma, a Kashmîrî, was Jehangir's Governor of Kashmîr (1614-18). He went to Andijan in Turkestan (Central Asia), on his way back from the Haj pilgrimage. There he learnt how to make carpets. He also brought tools of the trade back with him. In turn, he taught his fellow Kashmîrîs how to make carpets. That is why all carpet makers greatly respect his tomb in Gojwara (a residential neighbourhood in downtown Srinagar).

Vegetable dyes ceased to be made in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, under the influence of European customers. Dyes used ever since have been chemical: aniline and alizarin. Initially these were imported from Europe.

However, British custom cut both ways. In 1902, the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, paid £100 for a Kashmîrî copy of what is perhaps the most



famous Eastern carpet in the world-the A.D. 1536 Persian carpet at the Ardabil mosque in Kashan. This led to a burst of creativity within Kashmir. Besides, it were British businessmen who took Kashmiri carpets to the USA, exhibiting them at the Chicago World Fair of 1890. A huge market thus opened up. Other Englishmen, like Devergue and, later, Hadow, ensured, through the export of Kashmiri carpets, that the workers got good money.

Some Kashmiri carpet-makers migrated to Amritsar in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (See also 'Shawls' below and 'The history of Leh'.) They were known as the *qâl-bâfs* (short for *qâleen bâfs*, or carpet makers). Till the 1947 Partition of India, the Kashmiris of Amritsar even ran a rival centre of carpet manufacture. After 1947, I suspect, they went over to Pakistan and merged into that country's superb carpet industry.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kashmir's competition with carpets made in Pakistan and Iran see-sawed. Iran went through a burst of oil-inspired affluence in the 1970s. Iranian labour first turned far more expensive than that in Kashmir and then became too posh to stay in the trade at all. Kashmir filled the vacuum, and with style. In the late 1980s, when Iran became poor again, its carpets once again became competitive.

Kashmir's own troubles of the early 1990s led to its top carpet-makers setting up additional factories in South Delhi, mainly in the Qutab Minar area, without shutting down their Kashmiri operations.

Kashmir's carpet-makers have earned millions of dollars since the 1950s. Much of this has been invested in some of India's most expensive real estate: behind the Taj in Bombay, in Bangalore's leafy Cantonment, in Jaipur and, of course, all over Delhi.

*Patterns, designs and themes:* Carpets made for consumption within Kashmir would use subdued colours, their tints 'perfectly blended'. However, customers of the British Raj preferred brighter hues.

Because Kashmir's carpet industry is doing extremely well, it is always looking for new ideas and designs. Therefore, Kashmir's carpet manufacturers routinely use (authentic) designs from their Persian, Turkish, Turkman, Caucasian, mediæval Kashmir-Mughal and Jaipur-Mughal heritage.

GMD Sufi says, 'Both shawls and carpets manifest ...the allegorical language of the passions and virtues of the people of Kashmir. Some of the productions tell the story of the lives of famous personages, others depict historical episodes, poetic fantasies or religious and philosophical themes.'

The Dastkari Hât Samiti lists the better known designs thus:

- i) *Mohtashan Kashan:* A central medallion is surrounded by floral motifs. This is a celebrated Persian design.
- ii) *Syrk Turkman:* The Syrk tribe evolved this type of rug in ancient times.



- iii) *Shikârgâh*: Hunting (shikar) scenes were a staple of Mughal miniatures. Such paintings are blown up and reproduced in 'Shikârgâh' carpets. Personally, I take a very poor view of miniatures that are blown up in size: in Kashmîr or in Madhubani (Bihar, Central India). All the shortcomings of Eastern portraits become evident and get amplified in enlargement.
- iv) *Kashmîr Qum*: This kind of carpet has a Persian pedigree. In it the design consists of panels that are repeated.
- v) *Turkman Princes Bukhara*: In such carpets the design is based on a candle-stand.
- vi) *Kashmîr Mughal*: Here the designs are geometric with a floral effect.
- vii) *Kashmîr Kashan*: The Tree of Life is portrayed in this type of carpet. Sometimes flowers, animals and birds, too, are shown.

*Purchasing a carpet*: These are the things to consider, the questions to ask:

- i) Is the carpet made of 'silk on silk' (i.e. a silk 'pile' or 'upper surface' on a silk base)? Or does it have a silk pile on a cotton base? Or a mixture of silk and wool on a base of cotton? Or wool on a cotton base? The price would vary accordingly.

The base of woollen carpets is always made of cotton. This is true of most silk carpets, too. If the base is made of silk, the 'fringe', too, would be of silk. Such a carpet would be very expensive. Sometimes, some of the important motifs in a woollen carpet might be made of silk.

- ii) How many *knots* are there per inch when you look at the lower surface of the carpet? The greater the number of knots, the more expensive the carpet will be and the longer it will last. Many carpet shops now keep an eyeglass and a 'footrule' to let you count for yourself. Turn the carpet upside down. Then choose the portions where you will count the knots. Scan at least three different parts of the carpet, randomly selected, on the lower surface (i.e. the 'reverse' or the base). The number of knots per square inch used in Kashmîrî carpets varies between 18x18 and 22x22. (It could also be a number like 18x20.)
- iii) Does the pattern lack *symmetry*? Sometimes the design at one end of a carpet is bigger or smaller than its opposite number at the other end.
- iv) Have one or more *lines* in the design been *skipped* altogether, making the pattern look odd?
- v) The *outlines* of the motifs on a carpet should be firm and 'crisp'. If they are blurred, insist on a huge discount-or avoid.



- vi) The *edges/sides* of the carpet should be straight and perfectly parallel to each other. A wavy edge, or the length/ breadth at one end being smaller/ larger than at the opposite end, shows shoddy workmanship.
- vii) '*Art silk*' means 'artificial,' not 'artistic,' silk. The Kashmiris call it 'staple'. It is also known as 'mercerized cotton'. 'Art silk' carpets cost around a third of their cheapest pure-silk counterpart, but more than wool. Please, please satisfy yourself on this count. A thread randomly selected from such a carpet will burn quickly, because it is synthetic. Real silk burns slower. 'Art silk' shines much like the real thing. One foolproof test for amateurs is the *weight*. 'Art silk' carpets weigh one and a half times as much as the same size in silk. For example, a 3' x 5' silk carpet should weigh less than 4 kg. The same size in staple will be more than 6 kg.
- viii) What is a 'seventy-five percent silk carpet'? The upper surface, the pile, of such a carpet might be of pure silk, but the base of some other material. So, as a *percentage* of the total amount of yarn used, the silk content might be 75 or 80%.
- ix) What if the number of *knots* you find on counting is less than what the dealer had promised? Count a few more 'square inches' at different places and take the average of the lot. There will be reason to disbelieve the dealer only if the average is less than what he had said.
- x) What are single and *double knots*? Stroke the pile (upper surface) of the carpet with your hand. If it consists of double knots, the pile will bend when stroked in one direction but remain straight when stroked in the other direction. Single knots are fluffy. They behave in the same manner in both directions. You can also make out double knots by looking at the 'base'.
- xi) Are there carpets *without knots*? Yes, some carpets are tufted instead. These are far less durable. And less stiff and less firm to touch.
- xii) Did *you* choose the carpet showroom/ factory, or did a 'middleman' take you there? Remember, the middleman gets a commission (and not just on carpets and not merely in Kashmir; this happens in most parts of the world).

You can watch a carpet being made. In S  rinagar almost all carpet factories encourage you to do this.

*Carpets are made in all six districts of the Valley, namely S  rinagar, Budg  m, Kupw  r  , Pulw  m  , B  r  mull   and   na  t  n  g.*



*Carpets are sold* in Srinagar at showrooms in and around Residency Road, Polo View and the Bund, and also on the Boulevard. They are also sold at carpet factories on the outskirts of Srinagar-on the way to the Shalimar, and on the way to Hazratbal.

### Chain-stitching

Such stitching is done not by a needle but by a hook, called an *ari* (pron. â-ree). Hooks are more efficient than needles because they embroider the same surface much faster.

The base used most commonly is pre-shrunk, white, cotton cloth. The thread can be of wool, silk or cotton. In the best (and most expensive) pieces i) only the finest woollen thread is used, and ii) a very large number of tiny stitches are used-the tinier, the neater and the more, even the better. The cloth used as the base is not meant to be seen at all and is covered entirely by the stitches. A special golden coloured thread is used in this craft. Sometimes threads of 'staple' are used instead of woollen threads.

The craft is not very old. It was invented after 'gabbas' were. Therefore, at most it must have started in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*The design:* The background is always in one single colour and consists of a number of concentric circles, each the size of a coin. The motifs and figures of the foreground are more brightly coloured.

*Fabrics* that chain stitching is done on include cotton, dosooti, hand-woven cloths, silk and wool.

*Uses:* Chain-stitched fabrics are used for curtains, cushions, floor-coverings, garments, soft-leather and upholstery. (See also 'Crewel' and 'Gabbas' below.)

*Chain stitching is done in* the Ânañtnâg, Bârâmmullâ, Kupwârâ, Pulwâmâ and Srinagar districts.

### Copperware

Items made of copper are mainly for the local market. They are not very upmarket either, despite their obvious beauty. As a result, of all Kashmîrî handicrafts, they are the best value for money. The price is decided by the weight of the metal used and by the amount of ornamentation (*naq-qâ-shee*).

*Types of utensils made:* 'Samovars', ingenious vessels in which a low fire burns in the lower third and tea smoulders in the upper portion, are popular with tourists as well. So are copper bowls and plates. Other utensils made of copper include cooking vessels, cups, ladles, trays and tumblers.

*The motifs used* are very stylised. They come in both relief and intaglio. (See 'Walnut' below for 'intaglio' and 'relief.') 'Badam' (almond), the Chinâr leaf, flowers, intertwining vines, leaves and 'the mehrab' (Islâmic



arch) are among the most popular motifs. Abstract designs, too, are used. The designs are then oxidised to make them stand out against the background. Products made of copper are beaten, embossed, engraved or just plain.

The Kashmiris have mined copper for more than a thousand years now. Copper mines were a major source of income for the 15<sup>th</sup> century Emperor Budshah.

The coppersmiths of Kashmir work with brass as well. Many have descended from families of silversmiths. Increasingly copper trays are being fitted onto wooden bases.

*Copper products are made mainly in S  rinagar city. Within the city, the following localities are best known for their products: Bohri Kadal, Fateh Kadal, J  m   Masjid, Nalamar, Rainawari, S.R. Ganj and Zaina Kadal.*

*Copperware is also made and sold in S  rinagar at Anchar, Bahloochi Pora, Batak Pora, Bota Kadal, Goj  war, Kalnath Pora, Onta Bawan, Makhdoom Pora, Naoshera, Pazwal Pora, Sikh B  gh, Syed S  heb, Terigari Pora and Tuluwari.*

### Crewel-work

Crewel-work is a form of embroidery. The broad principles are the same as in chain-stitching (see above). However, here the cloth used as the base is seen clearly because its surface is covered with chain-stitched embroidery only where there is a motif, not everywhere. The colours are not as bright either. The base is normally white or off-white cotton. (Dosooti is normally the cloth used. See 'Gabba' below for more about this cotton cloth.) The woollen thread used in the embroidery employs just two or three colours at a time. Only single-ply thread is used.

Chain-stitching is normally used in wall hangings, bedcovers and rugs/ 'carpets'. Which means that these products are sold by the piece and have definite borders. 'Crewel-work', on the other hand, is normally used in curtains. It is also used in upholstery, tablecloths, cushion covers, bedcovers and a roundish shopping bag unique to Kashmir. 'Crewel-work' is rolled into bales and sold by the metre. Therefore, there are no borders at the top or bottom of the cut-pieces, because they are not individual works of art.

This is a European, perhaps British, craft brought into Kashmir in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. 'Crewel' is the name of the thin worsted yarn. 'Crewel-work' is the name of the embroidery.

*Crewel-work is done and sold at:* In S  rinagar city: the Bund, Dal Gate, Karan Nagar, Karfali Mohalla, Nawab Bazar, Nawa Kadal, Nayeed Kadal, Nowhatta, Safa Kadal, Tangpor   Mohalla, Tarabal and the Third Bridge.

'Crewel embroidery' is done in all six districts of the Valley, namely   na  tn  g, B  r  mull  , Budg  m, Kupw  r  , Pulw  m   and S  rinagar.



## Embroidery

A 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. plate found in the ruins at Harwan, near Srinagar, shows a woman wearing an embroidered shawl. At some stage this art, like many others, died out. Mir Syed Ali, who came to Kashmir from Hamadan in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, revived some of the Valley's lost arts. Artisans from Iran accompanied him and settled in Kashmir. Emperor Zain-ul-Abedin (1420-70), aka Budshah, encouraged more craftsmen to come over from Iran. Some of them were experts in embroidery. As a result there are Iranian features in Kashmiri embroidery.

Most of the motifs used are floral. However, sometimes the patterns can be geometric. They are drawn on cloth with the help of paper stencils. The craftsman then fleshes out the pencil drawings with coloured thread pulled by a steel needle. Zari embroidery alone is done by women. All other kinds of embroidery are the preserve of men. The Srinagar and Budgam districts are the main centres of embroidery.

The kinds of stitches used in Kashmiri embroidery include the buttonhole stitch, the chain stitch, the herringbone stitch, the knot stitch, the satin stitch, the slanted stitch and the stem stitch.

There are two broad categories of embroidery in Kashmir:

- a) *Jalik-doozi*: This is embroidery on large-sized cloth, to be used as furnishings (curtains, bedspreads, table cloth and the like). It is employed only in four kinds of crafts: i) 'crewel embroidery', ii) 'namdas', iii) 'gabbas' and iv) fur-based crafts.

This art is also known as 'wool-work'. The strokes used are broad. The thread used is, invariably, wool. The motifs are inspired by flowers, leaves—especially the distinctive Chinâr leaf, fruits, especially the almond—and birds and wild animals. Of course, these motifs are stylised and rarely realistic.

- b) *Sozan-kâri*: This is embroidery done on cloths of a smaller size. It is used in garments: women's shirts, stoles and pashmina and ruffle/raffal shawls. It is also used in furnishings. The motifs are finer, more delicately wrought and far more difficult to create than ordinary embroidery. The thread used, too, is much finer and normally silk. As a result each motif takes that much longer to create. The stitches used are herringbone and darn. The craftsmen are called 'sozan-kârs'. 'Sozan-kâri' is of two kinds:
  - i) *Rafgar ka'am*: This is the embroidery done on shawls and garments made of ruffle/raffal as well as on pashmina. Men wear this kind of embroidery on gowns, coats and mufflers. Women use it on western dresses, Indian saris, pherans, handkerchiefs and coats. It is also used on tea cosies, cushion covers, bags



and pillowcases. Of course, it is best known as the embroidery done on shawls. (See also 'Shawls' below.)

- ii) '*Zar doozi*': This craft is also called '*tilâ kâri*' or '*tilâ*' work. '*Zar*' and '*tilâ*' both mean 'gold'. In this craft, first a pattern is traced out on the cloth base (or 'ground') in pencil, using a paper stencil. The pattern will consist of motifs that can be large or small. The size depends on how much gold is intended to be woven into the garment. The cloth is then embroidered with two kinds of thread. The first kind is made of gold. (Thread made of gold is either white or golden.) The second thread—usually silk or cotton—is used to bind and fasten the golden thread.

'*Zar doozi*' is normally done on '*pherans*' and women's shawls.

*Do-rukha* or 'two-sided' embroidery is an art still found in Kashmir and Chamba (Himachal). It used to flourish in parts of Jammû (notably Basohli). In this the needle so winds its way through the cloth that the same pattern is woven on both sides of the cloth, sometimes using different colours on each side. (See 'Shawls' below.)

*Main areas where embroidery is done:* i) Srinagar district: Bashpura, Botapura, Ganderbal, Harwan, Naoshera, Soura and Zakura.

- ii) Budgâm district: Budgâm proper and Chadoora.

- iii) Ānañtnâg district: Craftsmen in certain villages of Ānañtnâg embroider '*dosooti*', '*gabbas*', '*namdas*', '*pherans*' and shawls (pashmina as well as ruffle/ rāffal).

*Zari embroidery is done in the Ānañtnâg, Pulwâmâ and Srinagar districts.*

## Fur

Officially, trade in most varieties of fur, animal skin and horns is banned. However, Kashmir has a hoary tradition of fur for every income-group. Which means that very inexpensive fur caps and leather gloves have traditionally been available in the Kokker Bazar-Lal Chowk area of Srinagar. Leopard-and bear-skin occupy the upper rungs of the fur hierarchy. The skins of various smaller cats, jackals, rabbits and domesticated animals like kids (young goats) and sheep are also used.

The Kashmiris have been using fur since the beginning of recorded history. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a new chemical, rexine, was introduced. It revolutionised the industry, because it gave leather a soft, glossy texture.

Fur and leather items that Kashmir specialises in include jackets and coats, gloves, bags, caps, carpet slippers, cummerbunds and belts, shoes and boots, and cushion covers. These items are often embroidered in the '*jâlik-doozi*' style. (See 'Embroidery' above.)



Before the bans started coming into place, Kashmîr had a substantial export trade in fur and leather goods.

### Gabbas

A 'gabba' is a rug which is either made of old, recycled woollen blankets or of shreds of *pattu* (local tweed). 'Gabbas' are generally called 'carpets for the common man'.

There are four kinds, the first three being specialties of Ânañtnâg town. i) *Dal guldâr*: This is an appliqué style. At the centre is a star, called the *chand* (which, incidentally, means 'the moon'); ii) embroidered 'gabbas'; iii) a combination of appliqué and embroidery; iv) the printed 'gabbas' of Bârâmullâ. In types ii) and iii), designs are embroidered on the finished product. The motifs are drawn from animal and plant life or nature.

'A kind of a refined patchwork,' is how an officer of the British Raj described the appliqué variety. The shreds are dyed in various colours, mainly in bright primary colours. They are then joined together in a manner in which the seams are concealed, sometimes by embroidery. The patterns are mostly geometric.

In the case of 'gabbas' made of whole blankets, the blanket is first dyed and then embroidered with coloured woollen threads. These threads are of double-or triple-'ply'. This kind of work is known locally as *feetay ka kâm*. Such 'gabbas' are mainly meant for local customers and normally are custom made.

Chain stitched rugs, too, are a variety of 'gabba'. (See 'Chain-stitching' above.) The cloth used in chain stitched 'gabbas' is totally different from that used in ordinary 'gabbas'.

The shape is almost always rectangular. The size rarely exceeds 9' x 12'.

Sometimes 'gabbas' are also used as curtains.

The fanciest 'gabbas' use broad-cloth and 'barrack blankets,' instead of old blankets as their raw material. At other times the yarn used is staple (see 'Carpets' above), not wool. This makes 'gabbas' look like carpets; and at a fraction of the cost.

Normally a cotton lining is sewn onto the reverse of 'gabbas'. Sometimes this lining is filled with wool to give the gabbâ a soft, cushioned feel.

No one knows for certain how gabbas originated. One theory is that an Afghân refugee called Abdul Rehman brought this craft to Kashmîr when, in a village near Trâl, he made a small, embroidered woollen rug to be placed on the saddle of the horse of his host, Kamal Butt. The type of embroidery that he had used was 'jâlik-doozi'. (I assume that this happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.)



According to another version, there lived in Isl  mabad (  na  tn  g), also in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a poor tailor called Lassa Tota. He could not afford a new bed-sheet. So he stitched together shreds of cloths of different colours to make a sheet. The result was so attractive that other tailors started imitating his work.

In any case, '*gabba*' started out as rugs for the poor man. As they grew in elegance, even the rich started buying them. Towards the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they started being made in B  r  mull   and, by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in S  rinagar.

In my family we purchase sheets of '*dosooti*' cloth that are slightly bigger than the '*gabba*'. This is a heavy cotton cloth, of which the yarn is 'double twisted'. The Handloom Development Corporation makes it in Kashmir. However, it is made in many other parts of India as well. It is sold at traditional textile shops everywhere in India. We give the '*gabba*' and the '*dosooti*' to our neighbourhood tailor in Delhi, who sews the '*dosooti*' behind the '*gabba*'. So when we place the '*gabba*' on the floor (or drape it on a wall) it is the '*dosooti*' that touches the floor or wall. This gives the '*gabba*' weight and body and thus prevents the '*gabba*' from crumbling on the floor. It also makes sure that its sides don't curve upward. The '*dosooti*' lining also makes the '*gabba*' last longer.

The art would have died out but for the patronage of Ranbir Singh (1857-85). The Mah  r  j   invited to Srinagar the four best '*gabba makers*' of   na  tn  g to make tents (*shamianas*) and floor coverings for the government. The Dogr   rulers were fond of this craft. It is said that once when Ranbir's father, Mah  r  j   Gulab Singh (reign: 1846-57) was travelling through rural Kashmir he met an elderly man who offered him milk and fruit juice. The Mah  r  j   was given a '*gabba*' to sit on. He was so impressed by the '*gabba*' that he asked for one.

*Sold at:* i)   na  tn  g: Various shops in the town.

ii) S  rinagar: The so-called Central Market, the Khadi Bhandars and Polo View.

*Made at:* i)   na  tn  g district:   na  tn  g proper, Anchidora, Chatter Gul, Mattan, Shangas and Qazigund.

ii) B  r  mull   district: Uri.

iii) S  rinagar district: Makharpor   and Sazgaripor  .

### Jewellery

Kashmir   jewellery has been influenced by a) Central Asia (e.g. the silver charm-cases worn on caps) and b) the Empress Noor Jeh  n, who brought with her intricate designs thitherto unknown in Kashmir. The jewellers of Kashmir have, since, internalised the art and their products are distinct in shape, size and boldness of strokes.



The ornaments are made of gold, silver, brass, copper, tin and even a fine kind of clay. Precious stones used include opals, carnelians, bloodstones, agates and turquoises.

Some of the most popular jewellers in Srinagar are grouped around the Hanuman Mandir of Amira Kadal. There are some in the Lambert Lane, too.

Traditional jewellers are grouped around the Third Bridge. They also make leaves of silver and gold, and fine copperware. Other localities in Srinagar where good jewellery is made and sold are Khanyar, Mira Masjid and Râjourî Kadal.

Retail outlets can also be found in Ashraf Mohalla, Bataporâ, Beeruni Andarwari, Kala Doori, Kangri Mohalla, Lakhriporâ, Shamsawari and Sheeshgari Mohalla. Some of these outlets also sell, by the kilogram, old jewellery that had once been worn by Gujjar and Bakerwâl women.

(See also 'Copperware', 'Silverware' and 'Turquoise work' in this chapter.)

### Kângris

Unlike boats and ceilings, you *can* take a '*kangri*' home. However, chances are that you might not want to, except perhaps as an inexpensive curio, because you would have no use for a '*kangri*', even if you live in Siberia. Only a Kashmîrî knows how to handle this body-warmer, which causes stomach cancer, burns all over the body and fires in wooden houses.

A *kâñgri* is a bowl-shaped clay-pot enclosed in a basket made of willow. It has a wide, open mouth at the top. The pot is the size of a football. The hard willow basket ensures that the user does not come in touch with the red-hot pot. There is a willow handle above to carry the *kangri* with, and a flat bottom for it to rest on. Sometimes there is a little spoon, made of silver or wood, and called the *Kâñij*, dangling from the handle.

Kashmîrîs place live coals in the clay pot and take the whole thing inside their loose '*pheran*' gown (which is slightly different from the smart, tight variant popular in Central India these days). It keeps the user warm at the peak of winter, but at the aforementioned cost to health. The *kâñgri* is the Kashmîrî equivalent of the hot-water bottle and is similarly taken to bed.

*History:* The word is possibly derived from i) '*kâni*' (the switch) '*gar*' (maker); ii) the Sanskrit '*kut*' (small) '*angâra*' (fire-place), or iii) the Sanskrit '*kâstha-angârîka*' (also: 'little fire-place'). A 19<sup>th</sup> century British historian had the gall to suggest that around the 17<sup>th</sup> century some Jesuit Father from Italy might have brought this contraption from Florence, Italy, where it is known as the '*scaldino*'. (Kashmîr had no recorded contact with the Jesuits in that age. Leh, which did, never knew the '*kangri*'. But then everything worthwhile in India-including the Taj Mahal-is supposed to have come from



Europe, according to such historians. In the case of the *kangri* there are definite references in 12 century A.D. Kashmiri literature to such a contraption.)

*Ritual significance:* The *kangri* is used in Muslim as well Hindu rituals.

*Made and sold at:* i) In Srinagar: Batmaloo and Habba Kadal; ii) In Bâramullâ: Sopore; and iii) Kupwârâ: Lolab. The kangris of Sopore and Lolab are particularly hardy.

### Lacquer woodwork

Also known as lathe-cum-lacquer work, this is not one of Kashmir's more subtle crafts. Nor is it unique to, or even mainly practised in, Kashmir. Articles made of wood are covered with a bright, shiny film of lacquer. The colour below this film is a deep, artificial looking brown. Items thus made include abacuses, bedsteads, child-walkers, ladles, rice measures, rolling pins, spinning wheels, stools and toys.

In Kashmir the craft is centred around Ānañtnâg.

### Leather

Partly because of political correctness and partly because of changing tastes this is a dying craft. Till the 1960s and '70s, the Bund would be overpowered by the strong odour of leather jackets, bags, portmanteaux, gloves, caps and upholstery. Prices are low by any standards.

Kashmiri leather's speciality was that it lasted very long. The 19<sup>th</sup> century British veterinary surgeon, William Moorcroft, was an expert in horses, and thus saddles. He wrote, 'A fabric of much greater importance to Great Britain than that of damasked sword-blades, is that of Yirak leather, or leather suited for saddlery...The leather was strong, solid, heavy and pliable, without any disposition to crack. Some of the pieces had been in use eighteen or twenty years, and were none the worse for constant wear.'

The British attributed this superiority to the method of tanning. The 1890 *Gazetteer* says, 'The skins, after being cleaned, are placed in a vat of clean water, with a layer of pounded galls between every two skins; a man is employed to tread them down daily, from morning to night, for twentyfive days, fresh galls being added every fifth day. They are then hung to dry...(The skin) is then put into water again and trodden, and rubbed until all greasiness disappears, when it is polished by being well rubbed with a blunt iron instrument.'

*Products:* Gloves, jackets, shoes (leather as well as suede) and suitcases. All of them are hand-stitched, often to a design specified by the customer.

*Sold in Srinagar at:* The Bund, Dal Gate, the Fourth Bridge, Polo View, Residency Road and Zaina Kadal.



*Made in Srinagar at:* Ahsan Sâheb, Ali Kadal, Amda Kadal, Bahlochiporâ, Dabtal, Dalal Mohalla, Fateh Kadal, Hazratbal, Kachgari Masjid, Kalamdan Pora, Kani Mazar, Khajaporâ, Lal Bazar, Nalabal, Nawab Bazar, Patther Masjid, Rehbab Sâheb, Sadarbal, Sehyar, Sikh Bâgh, Thag Bab Sâheb, and Urdu Bazar.

### Mats

Those who live in houseboats have traditionally both made and used mats. These are placed under the bedding and carpets, to provide additional warmth. The poor all over Kashmîr use these tough mats, known as *waggu*. They are made from *pits* (reed mace), a plant grown in swamps. Some such mat-making goes on in the Dal Lake itself, in the inner 'lanes' behind the tourist houseboats. Kalpana Manglik, an expert, rates the mats of Lasjan, which is south of Srinagar, as the best in Kashmîr.

### Namdas

(Pron. num-dâ, if singular.) These are inexpensive floor coverings or rugs made of pressed felt, and patronised by the middle classes. They are used mostly in the winters because of the warmth they provide. 'Namdas' are usually made of a mixture of wool and cotton yarn: the greater the proportion of wool, the more expensive the 'namda'. You can leave the cotton out, but never the wool. Cotton is used mainly to provide bulk. Besides, cotton gives a 'namda' its strength and durability.

The fibre is pressed into shape manually. 'Namdas' are then embroidered, with cotton or woollen thread, in the 'chain-stitch' (see above) tradition. They can be round, oval or rectangular. Sizes vary between 2' x 3' and 9' x 12'. The amount of wool used in a namda can be anything between one and eight kilograms.

This craft is believed to have been developed in Central Asia around the first century A.D. 'Namdas' were imported in large numbers from Yaqand till the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Central Asian 'namdas' were plain and unadorned. They were imported into Kashmîr and embroidered in the '*jâlik-doozi*' style. They were then re-exported to the rest of the world. This trade was at its peak during the First World War. Around 1929, the USA became a major customer.

It is estimated that 2,00,000 plain 'namdas' were imported into Kashmîr every year till 1940. Because of this enormous demand, around 1929 the craftsmen of Kashmîr started making 'namdas' locally. In the beginning the number of 'namdas' made locally was small and their quality inferior. In 1938, a full-fledged 'namda' industry was set up in Kashmîr. As a result, by 1941 Kashmîr stopped importing 'namdas' altogether. Which was just as well, because in 1947 the route to Yaqand was closed off because of the changed political situation.



*In Srinagar they are sold at the so-called Central Market, the various Khadi Bhandars, Polo View and Rainawari.*

*They are made at:* i) In Srinagar district: Aqalmir, Channa Dora Mohalla, Chhargari Mohalla, Chamadoori, Dekhdarhar, Dhakhabab Sâheb, Doompôrâ, Gojwara, Jamalatta, Kani Mazar, Khanwari, Malporâ, Koker Bâgh, Makhdoom Kocha, Mehraj Gunj, Rang Masjid, Sehyar Nawab Bazar, Sukalipôrâ, Umar Colony, Wantaporâ and Zahidporâ.

ii) In Kupwârâ district: Kupwârâ town.

## Paper

In the chapter on Kashmîrî art, I have mentioned Kashmîr's handmade paper. I have so much historical material (and not very old stuff either: apparently this legendary paper was being made till the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) on Kashmîr's fabled paper that I could devote a full chapter to it. But what's the point? You can't go out and purchase it because it's not being made any more. It is almost a mission with me to revive this art. Wish me luck.

## Papiér Mâchè

(pron.: pâp-yay mâ-shay) As its French name suggests, this craft uses mashed paper as its raw material. Delicate designs are then painted on this base, which is also lacquered. The craftsmen themselves used to call the art the '*Kâr-e-Qalamdâni*'.

*The Process:* Paper is soaked in water till it is reduced to a very soft pulp. After that it is pounded. A liquid adhesive is added to the mashed material. The mixture is smeared over a *vasal* (mould). When it sets and dries it is painted upon and then varnished to add gloss. Periodic varnishing over the years adds to the gloss. (The craftsmen's own varnish is perfectly colourless and transparent. It is made by boiling the clearest '*copal*' [sumdras] in pure turpentine.)

There are three or four different grades of papiér mâchè. The grading depends on how fine the pulp to which the paper had been pounded was. This fineness in turn determines how smooth the finished good will be. Prices vary widely according to the smoothness of the finish. They also depend on whether pure gold leaf was used in the designs or bronze dust or mere golden paint was. Real gold lasts much longer and its colour does not fade or tarnish.

The best pieces should be able to hold hot water.

In addition, there is-and has been since at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century-imitation papiér mâchè. Cardboard, wood or even leather is painted over in the papiér mâchè style for those who can not afford the real stuff. If you press



cardboard with the tip of a finger, it will give slightly. Real papiér mâchè won't. (Nor will wood, though.)

Most *designs* are brightly coloured. Intricate branches with ornamental leaves are a favoured theme. Human and animal figures, too, come up now and then.

*History:* Like many other crafts, this was brought to Kashmîr by the great Sultan Zain-ul-Abedin. Experts were invited from Samarqand (Uzbekistan) and, for some historical reason, this art became the monopoly of the Shias (Shiites) of Kashmîr. Syed Turâb, who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was the most celebrated practitioner of this craft in recent centuries. Its local name is *kâr-e-qalamdâni* (the art of the pen-case), perhaps because historically pen-cases were the most popular papiér mâchè product. It is also known as *kâr-e-munaqqash* (painted work).

Lhasa was traditionally a major market for Kashmîrî papiér mâchè. So was Paris.

According to the Dastkari Hât Samiti, 'Mughal kings often commissioned entire communities of craftsmen to make gifts as well as decorative panels and other items for palaces.' The *bârâdarîs* (pavilions) of the Mughal gardens at Nishat and Shalimar have panels made of papiér mâchè. Most of them date to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and have, therefore, faded considerably.

*Uses:* Almost anything can be made of mashed paper. Table lamps, tables, picture frames, folding screens (which serve as room-dividers), vases, trays, just anything. In the early twentieth century some imaginative shawl-manufacturers got cartons made of papiér mâchè to send their shawls to Paris in. (There the empty cartons were resold separately.)

Items made of papiér mâchè and sold in shops include bangles, bowls, boxes, cabinets, Christmas-tree ornaments, cups, dressing table sets (to keep toiletries and jewellery in), mirror-holders, panels, photo frames, screens, table-and pedestal-lamps, vases, wall-plaques and writing sets (pen-case, paper-knife, writing pad and stationery holder).

*Sold in Srînagar at* Alam Giri Bazar, Amira Kadal, the Bund, the so-called Central Market, Dal Gate, Hari Parbat, Hassanabad, Hawal, Nagin, Nowpura, Polo View, Rainawari, Residency Road and Zadi Bal.

*Made in Srînagar at* Adalat Masjid, Akilmir, Alamgiri, Amda Kadal, Aram Mohalla, Aram Pora, Arwat, Bâbâporâ, Bagwan Pora, Baharbar, Bota Kadal, Budoo Bâgh Chinkral Mala, Cyana Mohalla, Doniporâ, Hassanabad, Hasi Bhat, Kachi Mohalla, Kaka Mohalla, Kamgarporâ, Khajan Pora, Khushal Sar, Lal Bazar, Langiporâ, Madeen Sahib, Mandibal, Mughal Mohalla, Pazwal Pora, Pokherbal, Shamsawari, Sheshgari Mohalla, Shri Bhat, Sikh Bâgh, Syed Afzal, Syedporâ, Vichar Nag, Zadibal and Zari Mala.



*Made in Bârdmullâ at Delina and Wagoora.*

*Made in Pulwâmd at Gangoo and Suttsoo.*

## Pashmina

(See 'Shawls' below.)

## Perfumes

Kashmiri perfumes have been an obsession of mine since the early 1990s, when I discovered that Srinagar and Jammû had fairly nice traditions of making traditional *attar* perfumes. (Attar is a Greco-Turkish system, blended with India's own.) It's a dying art because modern young ladies in India prefer subtler, factory-made, Western or Western-style perfumes. Jammû has just two varieties of attar, jasmine and rose. Kashmir has at least a dozen.

It is difficult to obtain traditional Kashmiri perfumes today. Apparently this was always so. The 1890 *Gazetteer* records, 'The *'atta'* [attar?] of roses made in Kashmir used to be considered superior to any other; it never appears, however, to have been an article of commerce.' It still isn't.

In Kashmir, the almost odourless walnut oil (see the chapter on 'Flora') has traditionally been used as the medium for extracting the perfume of jasmine, iris (*zambak*), narcissus (*yimberzal*), daffodil (*nargis*), chamomile (*babeena*) and the yellow rose (*zeba*). One weight of these flowers is put into a bottle containing three weights of the oil. The bottle is placed in sunlight for forty days, by which time the oil acquires the perfume of the flower.

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this traditional method was gradually phased out in favour of more western-inspired methods. However, Kashmiri perfumes are strictly herbal in origin.

Since these perfumes are made on a very small scale, you will normally be able to purchase only perfumes-of-the-season. The few shopkeepers who sell Kashmiri perfumes rarely have out-of-season perfumes, even though these perfumes are very stable and, if stored in sealed bottles, can last for years. If the bottles are left uncorked the perfumes gradually evaporate. Therefore, they make excellent room-fresheners.

### Some of the better known perfumes

*Firdaus*: This is made of the juices of the yellow Batposh flower, which blossoms in April and May.

*Saffron/ Zâfrân*: This perfume is extracted from saffron (see 'Flora').

*Kot*: This perfume, like turpentine, is extracted from a tree: in this case in June, July and August.



*Jasmine:* This perfume comes in two colours, red and yellow. It is extracted from flowers that are yellow, white or blue.

*Bred Mushk:* A seed, also called 'Bred Mushk', yields this perfume. The seed looks like a raw almond. The tree bears a yellow flower and fruit in March-April and, if sufficiently sunny, in February as well.

*Rose:* This perfume is extracted from the petals of roses. The roses are pink (*Kashmîrî gulab*) or red (*Roosi gulab*). 'Gulab' means 'rose,' and 'Roosi' means 'Russian.'

*Amber:* A tuber that, naturally, grows underground, yields this perfume which, too, is somewhat like a resin.

*Ishq pechân:* A light blue flower that blossoms in March and yields the perfume of the same name.

*Sandalwood:* This perfume is extracted from sandalwood (which is purchased from the South Indian state of Karnataka).

Kashmîrî perfumes are normally sold as concentrates. They are pure extracts. As a result they appear to be more expensive than attars from other parts of India and Pakistan, which have been diluted in white oil. Nor are colours added to Kashmîrî perfumes.

Kashmîrî perfumes have, for that reason, often been used to make bath waters fragrant. One drop of a Kashmîrî perfume is normally sufficient for a tub full of water.

*Sold at Lal Chowk and Amira Kadal.*

## Pherans

Traditionally this has been a loose, rough, plain, tweed cloak for men as well as women. It has been transformed by the Delhi market-place into a pretty, embroidered, long-shirt for women, which fits snugly atop the *qameez* (long-shirt) worn with the *shalwar* (loose trousers) and which is now made of some fine cloth such as 'ruffle/ raffal'. The neckline is now invariably embroidered and at least a foot long. The cuff and hem, too, are embroidered with ari-work. (Ari: see 'chain-stitching' above.) The embroidery can be up to an inch thick. The Khânqâh-e-Mualla area of Srinagar (near the Shah-e-Hamadân shrine) is the best place for such deep embroidery.

It is believed that the word *pheran* is a corruption of the Persian *peh-râ-han* (lit. 'garment'). This would imply that the Mughals brought this dress to Kashmîr. But why would they? They never wore anything like this themselves. Answer: The Mughals did this to de-martialise the thitherto brave Kashmîrîs, by making them wear this sloppy dress. So the theory goes.



Increasingly, there's evidence that the '*pheran*' has been in Kashmir since much before the Mughals. A 15th century miniature painting that I came upon shows people in '*pherans*'. Besides, the Persian language came to Kashmir more than two hundred years before the Mughals.

### Pottery

The glazed 'Dal Gate pottery,' brown, white or green, is made in the neighbouring Rainawari area. Glass powder is used for the glazing. 'Martabâns' are the most popular products made thus. These are large vessels in which pickles are preserved, sometimes for as long as a year or even two. Curds are set in smaller brown pots made of the same material. Dinner sets, tea sets and vases are some the other items made of glazed pottery.

Less fancy, unglazed pottery is used in the rituals of the Kashmiri Pandits, especially during Shiva Ratri. The Kashmiri equivalent of the 'hot-water bottle' is the *kangri* (see above). The pot inside the *kangri*, as well as the tobacco-receptacle of the *hookah*, are the other commonly used items of pottery.

Glazed as well as ordinary pottery is sold in Srinagar at Dal Gate, Habba Kadal, Ishber, Kral Khud and Rainawari.

The pottery of Tsrar (Chrar)-e-Sharief is known for its colours, normally blue and red. Sometimes flowers, green or white, are drawn on the pots.

### Shahtoosh

(Also known as 'toosh'. See 'Shawls' below.)

### Shawls

(See the chapter on 'Kashmiri Shawls'.)

### Sherbets

'*Sherbets*' are a by-product of the Unani (*yu-nâ-nî*) method of making medicines. Though Unani literally means 'Greek,' this is the system of medicine found in all Muslim lands, including mainland India. However, as in the rest of South Asia, colas are edging '*sherbets*' out of Kashmir as well. Though this art has survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it might not last into the second half of the century.

Kashmiri '*sherbets*' are made mainly in the Fateh Kadal area of Srinagar. The houses and shops on the road outside the Khânqâh-e-Mu'alla are the hub of this craft. Mostly people of the Kosgar caste make Kashmiri '*sherbets*'. The Kosgars have now started joining the professions. Some of them have become medical doctors. There are, thus, very few left behind to make '*sherbets*'.



*The method:* The ingredients used are chiefly flowers and herbs. These are put into a large cauldron (*deigh*) on a base of water or some other liquid. The cauldron is then heated, preferably on a log-fire. A *sarposh*-like lid is placed atop the cauldron. These are thick and heavy lids made of metal, often with fine patterns etched on them. They are not flat. Instead, they rise towards the centre, and right in the middle there is a small peak. They, thus, look somewhat like the domes of Islâmic mosques.

During the making of '*sherbet*' these lids (*sarposhes*) are placed upside-down atop the cauldron, the peak pointing downwards. After a while, steam begins to rise from below. It collects on the convex surface of the *sarposh* and condenses there as a liquid. [Because the convex lid has been placed upside-down, it is concave now.] This liquid slides down towards the peak, from which it starts dripping down. There's a receptacle below the 'peak' which receives the thick, concentrated sherbet.

The '*sherbet*' is then stored in large glass pitchers.

*Custom-made:* The best '*sherbet*' are made to order, with ingredients used in the precise ratio desired by the customer. For some reason *sherbet* makers do not stock glass-bottles to sell their product in. So, take empty bottles along. Or you will wind up paying a small fortune for the bottle.

## Silk

Karnataka and Bengal and Benares have always produced more silk than Kashmir. Raw silk loses some of its weight during boiling: Kashmiri silk loses the most in the world (25 to 30%). (In Japan, and in other parts of India, the loss is around 20 to 22%.) A study conducted by the State government around 1983 indicated that this meant that the silk industry of Jammû and Kashmir was less efficient and more wasteful than elsewhere. However, going through 19<sup>th</sup> century records I noticed that this has always been so and might even be a characteristic of Kashmiri silk.

The silkworm of Kashmir is smaller than elsewhere and feeds only on mulberry leaves (vs. four kinds of leaves elsewhere). Mughal historians noticed that 'the mulberry (was) little eaten. Its leaves (were) reserved for the silkworm'. Later administrations, like the Dogrâs, preserved the mulberry tree by law.

*History:* While silk might have been made in Kashmir as early as in 2,000 B.C., that's only a guess. The earliest references to trade in Kashmiri-silk date to around the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It would be taken to Bukhara in Central Asia and thereafter sold in places as far apart as Damascus and Europe. The Mughal emperor Jehangir as well as his father's historian, Abul Fazl, both mention that silkworms' eggs were imported from Gilgit and Tibet.



A recurrent theme throughout history has been that the quantity of silk produced in Kashmir was 'insufficient for domestic purposes'. (This reference is from Moorcroft, 1824, during the Sikhs' rule.)

Around 1855, there was an epidemic among the silkworms of Europe. So, Italian experts came over to Kashmir and took back 25,000 ounces of seed. Mahārājā Gulab Singh had by then made his Chief Physician, Hakim Azim, responsible for all silk-related matters. His son, Hakim Abdur Rahim, along with a Punjabi partner, carried the tradition forward, using a few kilograms of seed smuggled into Kashmir from Kabul, concealed in walnut shells.

During Mahārājā Ranbir Singh's reign, silkworm seeds were imported from China and distributed among rural people. To add to the cosmopolitan pedigree of Kashmiri silk, expertise was brought in from Murshidabad (Bengal), around 1870. Under Bengali supervision one silk factory each was set up in Anāṭnāg town and Srinagar (at Haft Chinār). Both were called the Murshidabad factories. Later a silk factory was established at Raghunathpor, near Naseem Bāgh (Srinagar), which was called the Berhampore Factory! The Bengali connection was thus augmented. (See also 'Afghān Military Camp' in the chapter on Srinagar City.)

In 1895, Sir Walter Lawrence wrote that Kashmiri houses were 'suited to the requirements of silk rearing' because they were 'well ventilated and the Kashmiri knew how to regulate the temperature.' GMD Sufi adds, 'The mulberry seed (in Kashmir) is purer and better strained than the foreign seed.'

The Dogrā Mahārājās' contribution to the silk industry of Kashmir was enormous. However, it is difficult to agree with the Dastkari Hāt Samiti that 'Silk-weaving was introduced to Kashmir by Mahārājā Pratap Singh' (reign: 1885-1925). For one, his own ancestors had done a splendid job in this respect.

*Kinds of silk products made in Kashmir:* Charmose satin, chiffon, chinon, crepe, habutti silk, satin and tabby. Scarves, saris and silk cloth are among the products made. The saris are mostly printed outside the state.

*Purchase:* It is always safer to purchase silk from the Government Silk Factories at Raj Bāgh and Ram Bāgh. You know what you are getting. But the private shop at Raj Bāgh, next to the factory, is cheaper, and shops on Residency Road cheaper still. Please go to these private shops only if you are certain that you can tell the difference between real and artificial silk, or if the shop has a good reputation. I can't. So I got conned by a private shop once.



**Silverware**

'*Sher-e-Kashmîr*' Sheikh Abdullah used to present ornamental Chinâr leaves, made of silver, to special friends. Gen. KV Krishna Rao, Governor of the state in the 1990s, revived this tradition. You get these leaves only on order (takes 10-12 days) and you pay only for the silver. The craftsmanship normally comes free. (The silver can not, by definition, be pure. It has to be alloyed with a bit of some other metal to make it possible to work on.)

Lotus leaves are the other indigenous product made of silver. However, much of Kashmîr's silver-work follows the traditions of the rest of North India and of the Raj. Other items made of silver include bowls, boxes, cigarette cases, cups, dinner sets, goblets, plates, tea-and coffee-pots, trays, trinket-boxes, tumblers and vases. All these are made by hand.

Silversmiths are to be found in most major towns of Kashmîr. They are concentrated in Srinagar city, though. There are good silversmiths in Lambert Lane (off the Residency Road) and next to the Hanuman Mandir in the Amira Kadal area. Most of them double as jewellers. Silverware is also made and sold in Srinagar at Kalashpor, Râjourî Kadal, Zaina Kadal and Zarab Khânâ.

**Turquoise-work**

This kind of jewellery is, essentially, 'mosaic in brass'. Tiny pieces of turquoise are dyed and then set in brass. This method is used to make ashtrays, boxes, brooches, ear-studs, jewellery, necklaces and vases. This craft came to Kashmîr around the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Walnut**

(Please also see the section on 'Walnuts' in the chapter on 'Flora'. In that section we deal with the fruit, its oil, walnut dyes and the tree. Below we are concerned with handicrafts made of walnut wood.)

Walnut is the preferred wood for furniture, cabinets and, indeed, the construction of houseboats, because of the glow that comes from within the wood, because of its grain and because of its colour.

The grain is most pronounced-and the colour the darkest, almost black-in the root of the walnut tree. At the other extreme are the branches-light, almost blonde, in colour and with almost no grain. The trunk comes in between on both counts. Because of this the wood of the root is the highest-priced, that of the branches the cheapest and the trunk in between.

The colour of wood can vary hugely between one part of the same tree and another. So, the lighter part is dyed to look exactly like the darker part. However, many people like the natural variation in shades. Therefore, craftsmen often don't dye smaller handicrafts like trays and bowls made of walnut wood.



*Seasoning:* Unseasoned walnut wood can warp. Wood that has been left to 'season' for two years after the tree had been cut, is the best. That way all the moisture embedded in the wood evaporates and the wood does all its shrinking before it is converted into furniture. The best wood has the best grain: so the densely packed rings of the tree need to be shown off in the final product. Purchasing a felled walnut tree and leaving it to season for two years naturally increases the final price by that much.

Knots are not a defect. However, many customers don't like them. So, the manufacturer tries to hide them artfully during the sawing.

The patterns carved on the wood can be in relief (figures rising above the main surface) or intaglio (carvings below the surface). The deeper the carving, the more expensive will the product be. In 'semi-carving' the grain of the wood is what stands out rather than the carving, which will be just a thin strip along the edges (with, normally, a motif in the centre).

There is also an inferior type of walnut tree called the *zangul*, which does not bear fruit. Its wood isn't as strong, either, and has no grain. Sometimes in a piece of furniture all the visible parts are made of normal walnut wood, but parts which are not seen from the outside are of *zangul*. This lowers the price.

The furniture that you buy should be of wood which is at least one inch thick. Less than that will be cheaper but will also last much less.

*Maintenance:* Wax polish is the best. Varnish isn't, because it hides the grain and changes the colour.

*Other products:* Boxes, bedsteads, bowls, cabinets, cupboards, furniture, panels and screens. This author's invention-and a very elegant one, if I may say so myself-is a cabinet that stores 1200 CDs but can be broken down into four modules of 300 CDs each.

*Made and/ or sold in Srinagar city at* the Bund, Dal Gate, Hari Parbat, Hassanabad, Hawal, Kawdara, Nageen, Nalamar Road, Nowhatta, Polo View, Rainawari and Safa Kadal.

*Made at:* i) In Srinagar: Akal Mir, Amda Kadal, Bag-e-Goji Lankar, Bagwan Pora, Bota Kadal, Budshah Mohalla, Channa Mohalla, Daliporâ, Dekhdar Har, Fateh Kadal, Hamâmbal, Hathi Khân, Kachri Mohalla, Kak Sathoo, Kalamdan Pora, Kani Dewar, Kani Mazar, Khajporâ, Khudporâ, Lal Bazar, Madeen Sâheb, Mandibal, Mir Masjid, Narwara, Patliporâ (Payeen), Shah Mohalla, Shati Bâgh, Shri Bhat, Syed Hamid Pora and Urdu Bazar.

ii) In Budgâm: Shankarporâ.

iii) In Kupwârâ: Tangdar, Trehgam.



### Wickerwork or willow basketry

I had been looking at those inexpensive baskets all my life, displayed at shops in the Dal Gate and Hazratbal areas of Srinagar, never giving them much thought, because basket-work has traditionally been considered low-art. In the late 1990s, however, I started getting calls from friends in Chandigarh and Bombay to get them clothes-bins and 'boxes for magazines and books' made of the same willow-rushes. Suddenly, imaginative new uses were being found in the luxury market for Kashmîrî basket-work. If you plan to take them to the hot plains, please purchase them unvarnished and keep sprinkling them with water periodically, to make them last longer.

Going through the taxes levied by Kashmîr's own Sultans (1320-1586), I noticed that basket-work was one of the items to be taxed. That tells us how old the craft is.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century an experiment was conducted to grow British (weeping) willows in Kashmîr. It worked. In fact, because of the fertility of Kashmîr's soil, the twigs produced were longer than in even England itself.

*Products:* Baskets, clothes-bins, containers for bottles (so they don't break in transit; and to make it easier to hold very hot bottles), lamp shades, picnic hampers, shoe-racks, sofa sets and tables. The medium is so flexible that almost any kind of container can be made of wickerwork.

*Made at:* i) In Srinagar city: Anchar, Hazratbal and Soura; ii) In Srinagar district: Ganderbal, Haren and Shalabag; iii) In Ānañtnâg: Doru and Qaimoh; iv) In Budgâm: Tsrar-e-Sharief.

### Woollen articles

Blankets and other woollen articles are made in Bandipore, Budgâm, Beerwah, Chadoora, Guréz, Hañdwârâ, Inder Gadodar, the Lolab valley, Magam, Nadihal, Pulwâmâ, Shopian, Sopore, Tarzoo, Tilail and Trâl.

### Crafts that you can't take home

#### The Khatam-band ceiling

You might find the ceiling of the room in your houseboat or upmarket hotel made of polished wood, with pretty, geometric patterns on it. The 'base' of the ceiling would be flat, like ceilings everywhere. However, regardless of the design, after every two or three inches in every direction there would be raised surfaces, made of thin strips of wood, no longer than two or three inches each. The patterns could be squares, rectangles, octagons, diamonds or any design that could possibly be made with little strips of wood. Each strip is about ¼" wide, about an inch thick and as mentioned, two or three



inches long. The flat surface above (yes, above) these strips is not one long, flat board, either. It is made of hundreds of flat little pieces of wood, cut into squares, rectangles of whatever the pattern demands. Typically, these flat pieces are around 3" x 3", and as thick as a scale/ foot-rule.

'*Khatam-band*' ceilings, thus, are made of a very large number of tiny pieces of wood. The flat pieces alternate with the strips. They are fitted together—without a single nail—as in a jigsaw puzzle. These ceilings cost a fortune, but entirely because of the labour involved in fitting thin, flat pieces into grooves inside the thicker strips. (Each thin-flat piece has to fit into grooves in the four to six thick strips that surround it.) The wood is free, because it consists entirely of the waste wood generated while making windows, doors, wall panels and floors for that house.

Mirza Haidar Dughlat brought this art, called the '*khatam-band*', from Central Asia to Kashmir in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The wood used is a mixture of dark walnut and lighter coloured pine. The better known (Muslim) shrines of Srinagar and all the Dogra palaces of Kashmir have excellent '*khatam-band*' ceilings. The palace at Chenaini (Udhampur, Jammú) has a decaying '*khatam-band*' ceiling.

There are several dozen different '*khatam-band*' patterns. However, many of the classical designs are no longer being executed. The Chhattabal area of Srinagar is a good place to find experts in this craft.

### Pinjra-kâri

(Also known as '*zâli-pinjra*' and '*achhi-dâr*'.)

'Pinjra' means 'cage.' 'Kâri' is a suffix that means '-work.' Thus, together the two mean 'cage-work.' 'Zâli' seems to be the Kashmiri equivalent of the Urdu 'jâli,' which means net, 'wire-net', 'wire-mesh' or 'grate'.

Pinjra-kâri, thus, is a kind of openwork or latticework. It is done on fences, doors, railings, ventilators, room-partitions, screens and windows.

*Why it evolved:* The theory is that this form of openwork evolved because of the *purdah* (veil) system of Islâm. The sexes had to be segregated. And yet there were occasions when the women of the *zenana* needed to see what was going on in the men's section. For example, royal women wanted to see the proceedings of the court. On festive occasions middle-class women wanted to see the singing and dancing in the men's section. A screen that had little gaps, or interstices, between the artwork all over would separate the two sexes. Women could see through it without themselves being seen. At Islâmic shrines such ceiling-to-floor screens still surround the graves of saints inside. Women are not allowed inside, so they can look in through the interstices of the latticework. When you drive from the airport towards the city, then roughly 1.5 km. later, where the slope comes to an end, on the left you will see one such shrine.



Glass has been known to Islâmic lands almost since the advent of Islâm. In Kashmir, too, there are references to glass in ancient literature. The 15<sup>th</sup> century Zaina Dab (see below) used glass panes as well as mirrors in its architecture. And yet one of the major uses of latticework was as a substitute for panes in windows. It filtered the rays of the sun: though in Kashmir the only time when sun rays are unwelcome is July.

The craft came to Kashmir along with Central Asian Islâmic architecture. Muslim craftsmen brought the art over. However, the Kashmiri Pandits of Srinagar, Anāñnāg and Bijbehara were among its biggest patrons.

*In romantic poetry:* There is a whole body of Urdu poetry from the rest of South Asia about spying the ladylove through the interstices of a *chilman* (screen). In Kashmir, too, there are verses in which the beloved is asked to show her face through a *zâli pinjra* screen.

*History:* The existence of pinjra work on stone at Srinagar's 15<sup>th</sup> century Madni Sâheb mosque indicates that this craft was known during Zain-ul-Abidin's time. The Sultan's celebrated 12-storey palace, the Zaina Dab, was, however, the first building in Kashmir to use windows made in this fashion. Thus, at least by the Sultan's time wood was being used for this craft. (See the chapter 'A History of Kashmir' for more about the palace.)

Wood is a very Kashmiri material. The Mughals alone made mosques of stone in Kashmir. And yet '*pinjra-kâri*' started out during the era of Kashmir's own Sultans, with local stone-workers carving flowers, plants and vines on stone. Standards were not as good as in other Islâmic lands. The art reached its peak in Kashmir during the Mughal period, and on wood, not stone.

### ***Zoona dab balconies***

One of the most exciting forms of Kashmiri architecture is the 'dab' (pron. the same as 'dub') balcony. These are wooden balconies that jut out of the outer wall, like cantilevers. Each balcony is big enough to seat eight or nine people, who sit on cushions, with their backs against the balcony's three wooden walls. There is plenty of space for several dishes between them. (The fourth side opens into the living room.)

Normally there are no brackets under the floors of these balconies, which are suspended in mid-air, often above River Jehlum. I have always admired the architect's confidence that his balconies won't collapse and fall into the river under the weight of the people and the food.

'Zoon' is the Kashmiri word for 'moon.' A '*zoona dab*' is a balcony from which the moon can be seen. The windows of such balconies would normally have '*pinjra-kâri*' lattices instead of glass panes. Moonbeams would enter the living room through the spaces between the fancy pattern in wood. Sometimes glass panes of different colours would be fitted into



the lattice. In such cases the moonbeams entering the room would be multi-coloured.

Some balconies of this kind have survived the arson of the 1990s and are to be found along the Jehlum riverfront in Srinagar. The riverfront near the Khânqâh-e-Mu'alla (Shah-e-Hamadân) and its opposite bank (the Pather Masjid side) is one such stretch.

**Palanquins:** Brides are no longer carried in '*palanquins*'. They were till the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The sides of these '*palanquins*' were made of '*pinjra-kâri*' latticework. If pieces of coloured glass were fitted in the interstices of a '*palanquin*', it would be called an '*Aanâ Zânpânâ*' ('the palanquin with mirrors', even though it was glass and not mirrors that had been affixed).

*Where to find pinjra-kâri work:* i) Monuments and shrines: One of the finest examples of '*pinjra-kâri*' on stone is in the shrine of Thag (pron. like the central Indian *thug*) Bâbâ Sâheb in Srinagar. Limestone has been used on the windows and recesses of this shrine. Lattices have been created there using the grape-vine pattern. The shrine of Akbar Deen Sâheb at Dâdasar, near Trâl, is a first rate example of '*pinjra-kâri*' in wood. (See 'Pulwâmâ' district.) The Khânqâh-e-Faiz Panah shrine of Shah-e-Hamadân at Trâl used to be almost as good, but it got burnt in the 1990s. The shrine of Batamaloo Sâheb in Srinagar has some of the designs used at Dadasar.

The mausoleums of several Kashmirî saints have 'lids' made of fine pinjra-kâri latticework. Examples are the shrine of Râh Bâb Sâheb in Srinagar, where the sun and the stars are included in the pattern. The shrine of Bâbâ Naseeb Sâheb is another example. Tsrar (Chrar)-e-Sharief used to be a third, till a Pakistani mercenary set it on fire in 1995.

ii) Private houses: Basheer Akhtar, writing in 1987, observed that 'Houses with '*zoona dabs*' were all the rage in [Srinagar] in the olden days. These days the few remaining examples of such houses are only to be found in such parts of Maisuma and Tashwân about which it is said that in those areas Hâfizas [female nautch girls] would once enliven gatherings with their song and dance. Pandit Billa Kak Dhar's house in Safa Kadal used to be an excellent example of '*pinjra-kâri*'. However, times have changed and all the latticework has been removed from the windows. Similarly, glass panes have replaced '*pinjra-kâri*' latticework in all the windows of the old Makhdoom Sâheb shrine.'

iii) Houseboats: Today this art is kept alive mainly in houseboats, some of which have railings in the '*pinjra-kâri*' style.

*Other uses:* Apart from screens and railings, '*pinjra-kâri*' is used in ventilators, ornamental room-partitions, windows and doors.



## Houseboats and shikaras

A 19<sup>th</sup> century Englishman called Kennard is said to have built the first houseboat in Kashmîr. Entirely possible. However, all that he did was to build a houseboat in the European tradition. Kashmîr's own houseboats (*doongas*) have almost always existed. One of the earliest references to them (and a disparaging one at that) is in the 16<sup>th</sup> century *Ain-e-Akbari*.

Kennard's houseboat caught on. All modern Kashmîrî houseboats resemble their twins on the Seine in Paris-in concept, though not detail. Today there are more than 1,200 legal (and 700 illegal) 'modern' (i.e. not including traditional residential *doongas*) houseboats on the Dal Lake alone.

These are between 24 and 38 metres long, and 3 to 6 metres wide. Most of them are moored, almost permanently, to one of the shores of a lake (Dal or Nageen) or river (Jehlum or the tiny Tsont-e-Kol). If not a shore, then they'd be moored to an island. That's because they need permanent electricity lines and water connections. Some of them are connected to sewer lines, too.

Normally these boats are shifted only when they need repairs-or when they find a more profitable site. Otherwise they remain moored at that site, almost forever. Sometimes wealthy tourists want to travel on a lake or river in a houseboat. In that case tug-boats pull the houseboat to the destination.

A houseboat is a full-fledged house, with two to four bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchen, drawing and dining rooms, a little 'verandah' and a large deck above. It is made entirely of wood-walnut, normally-and is a boat that floats on a river or lake. All houseboats have flat bottoms. Except that the rooms and bathrooms are smaller, you can expect the same kind of facilities as in a hotel in that price range: televisions and refrigerators in the living room, attached bathrooms, running warm water, often a bathtub, western style toilets, clean linen and a shelf of books.

Typically, a *shikara* (boat) will ferry you from the road/ Boulevard to the houseboat. (This is not necessary if the boat is on the Jehlum. You can simply walk down from the Bund [embankment] to the boat.) Either way, the houseboat will be connected to firm land by a short plank. (The *shikara* ride to the nearest shore is normally free, if you've already checked into a houseboat or have a reservation. Obviously, it is free only on designated shikaras.)

You'll step onto a small 'verandah'. The first room that you will enter will be a living room, normally with a *khatam-band* ceiling and walls made of walnut. The carvings on these walls are generally a bit too rich by any standards, including Kashmîr's own. Coyingly rich. The next room usually is the dining room. Then comes a corridor, which leads to two or three (rarely four) bedrooms. It's uneconomical to have just one bedroom.



Bathrooms normally have western style toilets and can be quite modern. Almost all houseboats have a deck upstairs (often with garden umbrellas) where one can soak in the sun.

You can book the entire houseboat, or merely the rooms that you need. (Downmarket houseboats, popular only with young, foreign tourists, even let you hire just one bed in a dormitory.) Room charges normally include food. In case you don't want other people to stay in your houseboat, you can book the remaining rooms for half the advertised rent. Since tourists mostly come in the months when heating is not needed, heating is not included in the rent.

Sociologically, for some reason international tourists (who comprise just 9% of the total) prefer houseboats. This gets reflected in the choice of crockery, cutlery, furnishings, 'library' (one bookshelf, normally) and even cuisine. Tourists from the rest of India stay in hotels as well. Foreigners who choose to stay in one of the three luxury hotels in town often want a few nights in a houseboat as well. All luxury hotels arrange this as part of the package.

Tourists who like solitude opt for the Nageen Lake. The Dal Lake, however, is where the overwhelming majority of tourists stay, because it is better located.

To see what Kashmir's own houseboats looked like before Mr. Kennard, all you have to do is to go to the Dal Gate and look at the downmarket boats parked on the still waters of the northern side (i.e. in the direction of the old Golf Course). These, too, have rooms but are not posh and are in the Kashmiri style, i.e. people sit and sleep on the floor and not on chairs and beds.

These boats existed much before Akbar's time (he wrested Kashmir in 1586). His court historians recorded that he did not like Kashmiri houseboats. He preferred the two-storeyed version found in Bengal, which had elegant windows and of which he introduced a thousand into Kashmir. Somehow two-storeyed houseboats never caught on in Kashmir, partly because tall boats can't pass under bridges.

All Kashmiri boatmen (except in Hindi-Urdu films) are Muslims, and belong to a community called *hernz* (silent 'r') in Kashmiri and '*h  n-j  *' in Hindi-Urdu. They all claim to be descendants of Noah. (see 'The people of Kashmir')

Through history the Kashmiris have travelled-and carried grain, fruit and vegetables-from one end of the Valley to the other in boats. Large transport boats are called the *bahach* and can carry up to 1,000 '*maunds*' of grain. The *doonga* has a sloping roof and sidewalls made of matting. The boatman and his family live in the rear, the passenger in the front. '*Doongas*' carry up to 200 '*maunds*'.



*Shikaras* are scaled-down versions of the '*doonga*', meant entirely for ferrying passengers-from one bank of River Jehlum to the other if they are local passengers, and on pleasure cruises on lakes if tourists. Cloth awnings are used instead of matted roofs in '*shikaras*', which have low, cushioned seats for six to nine passengers. (Around four, in the case of pleasure cruises.)

While researching Kashmîrî art, I came upon a 15<sup>th</sup> century painting of what is now known as the Shankaracharya hill. It showed several '*shikaras*' floating on the Dal Lake. So, '*shikaras*' are at least that old.



# 16

## Kashmîrî Shawls

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**History:** Kashmir is a cold place. Wool has always been plentiful. So it stands to reason that the Kashmiris have been making shawls for as long as there have been people in Kashmir. The oldest extant reference to Kashmiri shawls is in Buddhist literature which dates to Emperor Ashok's age (c. 250 B.C.). The shawl industry of Kashmir, according to one estimate, employed more than a lakh (a hundred thousand) workers at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This figure must surely be an exaggeration.

There are many references to Kashmiri shawls in ancient Hindu and Roman texts as well. Apparently, they "were worn by the proudest beauties at the court of the Cæsars". (Historian G.M.D. Sufi has put this phrase in double-quotes but doesn't say where he got it from.)

The craft then went into a decline till the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It was around A.D. 1378 that Shah-e-Hamadân, the much-loved saint from Iran, brought a new variant to Kashmir. The then king of Kashmir, Qutb-ud-Din, gave official patronage to the industry.

In the sixteenth century, Naghz Beigh, a craftsman from Khuqand (Central Asia), accompanied the Mughal governor, Mirza Haidar Dughlat, to Kashmir. He brought with him some very refined techniques, mainly how to weave red and green spots in regular rows into the texture of the shawl.

The Mughals brought workers from Andijan [Turkestan] (see 'Carpets', above) to Kashmir to upgrade the shawl industry here. They evolved the *jiughha* design. (The *jiughha* is an almond-shaped jewel worn on the turban.)

The Mughal Emperor Akbar (16<sup>th</sup> century) was a connoisseur of shawls. He would get four kinds of shawls made: a) Toos Asal. These shawls were very light, and yet warm and soft. The wool of the toos(h) goat would be used. The natural colour of these shawls is grey; b) Safed alich or 'tarahdar'. Their natural colour is either black or white; c) Zar doozi, Alich, Bandinun, Chheet, Gulibetun, Keshdeh, Kulya or Purzdar; and d) Jâmâs: These were longer shawls.



The 16<sup>th</sup> century Mughal historian, Abul Fazal wrote, 'In former times shawls were often brought from Kashmîr. People folded them up in four folds, and wore them for a very long time. Nowadays they are generally worn without folds, and merely thrown over the shoulder. His Majesty [Akbar] has commenced to wear them double, which looks very well. His Majesty encourages, in every possible way, the manufacture of shawls in Kashmîr. In Lahore also there are more than a thousand workshops...'

A Kashmîrî journalist insists that Kashmîris ran these thousand-odd workshops of Lahore. Pakistani scholars Sherry Rehman and Naheed Jafri agree. Even Abul Fazal implies this. We thus have a very significant insight into how old the Kashmîrî diasporâ in Lahore is.

Rehman and Jafri say that the Kashmîrî shawl [or 'shal,' as they spell it] was a symbol of rank in Muslim courts all over the world and that it '[rose] to official recognition from the Mughal empire.' They attribute the excellence of these shawls to Kashmîr's 'unique access to the most unparalleled woolen yarn or raw material in the world through its location and trade routes through Kashmîr... Although the Kashmîrî Shal's strength lies in the many forms and shapes it has assumed over the centuries, the peculiar weaving technique that it initially had become famous for the world over, the double-interlock twill tapestry method of handloom patterning and weaving is virtually extinct.'

In 1664, a visibly impressed Francois Bernier wrote, 'These shawls are about a yard and a half long and a yard broad, ornamental at both ends with a sort of embroidery, made in the loom, a foot in width.' (In the volume on 'Ladâkh' in the chapter on the history of Leh, there are several references to how this trade has affected the histories of Kashmîr and Leh.)

George Forester added in 1783, 'In Kashmîr are seen merchants and commercial agents of the principal cities of northern India and also of Tartary, Persia and Turkey who, at the same time, advance their fortunes and enjoy the fine climate.'

The priciest shawls are *toos(h)*, *sozni* and *kâni*. *Toos(h)* shawls; referred to in the poetry of Habba Khatoon (late 16<sup>th</sup> century), are made of the wool of an animal of the same name and their natural colours are black, white and red.

Kashmîrî weavers settled in Lahore and Amritsar in a big way, because of the demand there. The British built a bazar for Kashmîrî weavers in Ludhiana to induce them to migrate there, to meet the demand for their shawls in England. Lahore was then ruled by the Sikhs. (In the chapter on the History of Leh we have more insights into why the British meddled with the shawl trade.) There was a major famine in Kashmîr in 1878 and 1879, the last straw that led to the exodus of even more Kashmîrî craftsmen to Lahore, Amritsar and Ludhiana.



It was around then that the industry went into a decline in Kashmir from which it never recovered. There were three main reasons: i) The loss of the French market because of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870; ii) The loss of the upper end of the north Indian market because the *Mahārājās* and Nawabs were displaced by the British. Princely Awadh, which perhaps was the biggest single patron, was annexed by the British; and iii) The Industrial Revolution, which led to the manufacture of cheaper machine-made shawls. (The last two reasons are also responsible for the wiping out of several other arts and crafts of India such as Basohli and Kashmiri miniature paintings.) However, even in that period of decline, a shawl could cost £300 in Kashmir itself, as Andrew Wilson recorded in 1875. (Before that the price of an expensive shawl could be over £1,000.) Rehman and Jafri add a fourth reason: 'the rapacity of the tax and duty regime.'

One market that has not changed over the last two centuries is that of Bengal. Because of their love of shawls, the Bengali elite would purchase Kashmiri shawls both from Kashmir and Amritsar, in addition to sometimes employing Kashmiri weavers in Bengal itself. As in Awadh, a Kashmiri community settled in Bengal, because of the trade in and manufacture of shawls.

*The Afghāns:* The Afghāns were the other rulers who patronised this industry.

The craft attained its present sophistication during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Āzād Khān was one of the Afghān Governors in Kashmir. (His period is variously given as 1783-92 and 1775-83.) It is said that during Āzād's tenure an expert shawl maker called Ali Bābā saw an animal (perhaps a fowl) walk on a white sheet. Ali found the marks of the animal's claws etched on the sheet. The maestro decided to create shawls with similar etchings. He replicated the footprints in embroidery. Thus was born Kashmir's first *sozan-kāri* shawl. (See 'Embroidery' above.) This soon became the dominant style in Kashmir. Shawls of this kind used to be very inexpensive. (Ali Bābā used to live in Srinagar's Sokāli Pora neighbourhood. He was also known as Saeed Bābā and Ala Bābā. Some claim that he invented Amali or amilkar shawls.)

According to another tradition, Nadir Beigh, a master craftsman from Turkestan, came to Kashmir in the sixteenth century. That's when Mirza Haider Dughlat ruled the Valley. Some say that it was Nadir who brought to Kashmir the art of making shawls with colourful patterns.

In 1803, an Armenian trader called Khwaja Yusuf visited Kashmir. Some say that it was the Khwaja who introduced in Kashmir the art of making Amali shawls. Others say that Yusuf only brought new designs with him and thus infused new life into an older craft.



The manufacture of shawls flourished during the Sikh period (1819-1846). Some of the finest shawls were created during the reign of Mahārājā Ranjit Singh. The Mahārājā got a shawl made on which were embroidered all the achievements of his era. The shawl cost Rs. 5,000 to make.

'Double-sided' shawls, in which the embroidery on both sides looks the same, were first made in 1864, during the reign of the Dogrā Mahārājā Gulab Singh. (See 'Embroidery' above.) The first such shawl was created jointly by Mustafa Pandit and Aziz Pandit.

*Exports to the West:* Around 1796, Abdullah Khān, the Afghān governor of Kashmir, gave Syed Yahya, a visitor from Baghdad, an orange-coloured shawl as a farewell gift. The Syed gifted that shawl to the Khedive of Egypt. The Khedive gave it to Napoleon Bonaparte, who passed it on to Josephine. And thus Paris acquired a taste for Kashmiri shawls. Or so the story goes.

Rival yarns would have it that the light veil on the back of Mona Lisa's head was a Kashmiri ring shawl, and that Europe knew of these shawls as early as in 1519 (not counting the ancient Romans, of course).

'Cashmere' (i.e. pashmina) was a household name in Europe by Balzac's time (late 19<sup>th</sup> century).

Forty thousand looms sprang up in Kashmir by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to meet the requirements of the European market. One to two thousand maunds of wool would be imported every year. As much as 80% of Kashmir's shawl exports in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were to France; 10% to the USA; 5% to Italy and the remaining 5% to the rest of Europe.

French traders picked up two-thirds of these exports in Kashmir itself. Kashmiri traders themselves exported the rest to London, where the shawls were sold at auctions. Even in London the purchasers were mostly French.

Moorcroft noted that shawls were exported not only to the rest of India but also to Russia and Central Asia. Sir Walter Lawrence gave a more precise estimate of this export trade. He said that between 1862 and 1870, the average annual export of shawls was 25 to 28 lakh (rupees or shawls is not clear). What is certain is that in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century shawls worth £130,000 used to be exported every year from Kashmir. Of this, shawls of a value of around £90,000 were sold to Europe alone, and the rest within Asia (mostly the rest of India).

In 1870, Prussia/ Germany started defeating the French in war. There would be widespread mourning in Kashmir every time news of a fresh French reverse was received. An entire community of 90,000 weavers and traders stood to be wiped out. The Dogrā Mahārājā stepped in and bought shawls worth several lakh rupees to prevent this.



In 1873, £2,500 worth of Amritsar's vastly inferior shawls were sold at the London sale, whereas 'nothing whatever... out of the £4,000 worth of Kashmir shawls that were presented were sold'. (The quote is from an 1873 British report.) This was attributed by contemporary British writers to Amritsar's more favourable location. The development greatly alarmed the Mahārājā who launched 'alleviation' measures, including employing some shawl-weavers in the government-run silk factory and in the carpet trade.

And then the European market began to vanish. Moorcroft had come to Kashmir in 1820-22 and had studied the craft and its processes most thoroughly. He passed on the knowledge that he had gathered in Kashmir to manufacturers back home in England. Thus were born the 'Paisley Shawls' of Scotland. They edged Kashmiri shawls out of Europe almost completely. High-quality imitations made in France cornered what was left of the market. Fashions changed in France and America, to deliver the final blow.

For over a century after that, Kashmir's main market was the rest of India. Since the 1990s, however, there has been a great pashmina revival in New York in particular and the West in general.

*The word 'shawl':* It is said that the abovementioned Naghz Beigh once presented his master, Mirza Haider Dughlat, with a 1½-yard long sheet made of expensive pashmina. When asked what the raiment was called, Naghz replied that it was a 'shawl'. The name stuck. ('Shawl' is the word the people of Khuqand use to refer to blankets.)

#### *Types of Shawls:*

##### **1) Classified According To Materials Used**

Shawls are made of three kinds of material: wool, pashmina and shahtoosh.

- i) *Woollen shawls:* The simplest kind of fabric woven in Kashmir from pure wool is called 'ruffle/ raffal' or 'raffel'. (Sometimes cotton and/ or synthetic yarn is added to the wool.) This base is then embroidered upon.

##### **The principal types of embroidery are:**

- a) Sozni or 'tamboured work': This is embroidery done in strips along the edges of the shawl. The colours used are few, never more than three, and sober. If done well, the embroidery does not result in a sketchy 'negative' on the reverse. Instead, the best sozni-work consists of motifs on both sides. The designs are either abstract or representations of flowers and leaves. Just the outline of the motifs is embroidered. 'Stem-stitching' is used. (See also 'Embroidery' above-'do rukha'.)
- b) Ari or hook embroidery: As in chain-stitching (see above), concentric circles are embroidered and atop them flowers and leaves.



- c) The so-called *papiér mâchè* style: Motifs-flowers and petals once again-are as bright as in *papiér mâchè* and are woven into broad panels along the breadth of the shawl, on either side. Sometimes the entire shawl is embroidered upon. A black outline is drawn around each motif. 'Satin-stitching' is used.
- d) *Zari*: Gold, silver or other metal thread is used in this kind of embroidery. *Zari* shawls are expensive and worn on formal occasions such as weddings. (See '*zar doozi*' in the section on 'Embroidery' above.)
- e) *chikin-doozi*
- f) *jâlik-doozi* (see 'Embroidery'.)

Amali work is discussed later in this section.

European shawls were made on jacquards and drawlooms. Europeans were also fond of printed shawls.

Staple (ari-work) embroidery is done in Srinagar district.

- ii) *Pashmina Shawls*: Pashmina is a soft yarn made of the hair of the Himâlayan ibex (*Capra sibirica*), a goat which lives in Ladâkh, around 4,500m./ 14,000' above the sea. The nomadic herdsmen of the Chang Thang plateau (Ladâkh) rear this goat. Every summer the herdsmen shear the thick growth on the goat's underbelly and sell it at a decent price. Some species of wild goat also yield wool that is almost as soft and fine. There are 19<sup>th</sup> century accounts that such goats—and undomesticated ibexes-were, sometimes trapped with snares or hunted for their wool. However, that is a thing of the past. Much of the pashmina used in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries has come from goats domesticated by individuals and the government. Huge pashmina farms set up by the government ensure that the supply of the wool is plentiful, and reasonably priced.

Shawls made of pashmina are expensive and are woven in Kashmîr (the best and the most expensive), Basohli (medium quality and medium prices) and Kargil (cheapest and coarsest). They normally are white or the brownish colour of jute sacks (gunny bags). Their price comes down if the pashmina is blended with ordinary wool or rabbit's hair.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Basohli, Bhaderwâh and Doda (all in Jammû) had sizeable shawl industries. *The Gazetteer* recorded in 1890 that these three 'enjoy great advantages, as they are free from many of the burdens and restrictions imposed upon their brethren in the valley of Kashmîr. The shawls manufactured in these localities hold a middle place in the market; while greatly inferior to the veritable Kashmîr shawl, they are of superior quality



to shawls manufactured at Amritsár [sic] and other places in the Punjáb, which are largely adulterated with *wahabshahi*, an inferior wool produced at Kirmán.'

Most 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century accounts speak of the relative inferiority of shawls made by ethnic Kashmîris at Lahore and Amritsar. And yet a fairly wide variety of shawls was made at these two cities of the Punjab. Soon the shawls of the Punjab took on an identity of their own. Because they were less expensive, they were more successful commercially.

'Half-pashmina' shawls normally contain no pashmina at all. They are made of some inferior material that feels and looks somewhat like pashmina.

Only Kashmîri pashmina shawls are embroidered, which adds considerably to their price. The very expensive *jâmâwâr* shawls are embroidered all over. (Jamawar literally means 'a gown-piece'.) Other pashmina shawls are embroidered to a lesser extent—normally just a thin strip along the edges.

The increasingly rare *chashm-e-bulbul* shawls are not embroidered upon at all, because the artistry lies in the weave itself, which consists of thousands of little 'lozenge-shaped squares'.

*The history and politics of pashmina:* Pashmina is expensive, though not half as fine or pricey as shahtoosh. However, the amount of pashmina wool gathered-and shawls made-is vastly greater. It has therefore loomed enormously large in the economics-and, thus, politics-of Kashmir and Leh. So enormously large, that it was one of the major reasons why Punjab conquered Kashmir and the Dogrâs Ladâkh. If since 1947 there has been a Kashmîri diasporâ in Pakistan's Punjab province, including some ranking politicians, pashmina is a factor.

Around 1680, the Dalai Lama's powerful Tibetan army allied with the Mongols. They attacked Deldan Namgyal, king of much of present-day Leh district. At his request, the Mughal army came to his rescue. The Mughals operated from their nearest provincial capital, Srînagar. In return, Deldan conceded to Kashmir a monopoly on the purchase of pashmina wool.

In 1684, Leh and Tibet signed the Treaty of Tingmo(s)gang. The treaty gave Ladâkh a monopoly over the pashmina trade, including pashmina produced in western Tibet. Ladâkh operated its monopoly through Kashmîri traders, who were settled in Spituk (Leh) as part of this treaty. From Spituk the Kashmîris would buy up all the raw pashmina produced in Chang Thang as well as Rudok. They would then send the wool to Kashmîr, where it was woven into shawls.

That is why the Kashmîris are the only people in the world who really know how to work with pashmina. Even the weavers of Basohli are ethnic Kashmîris. The pashmina trade was so lucrative that both the British and Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh's Punjab-based empire coveted it. It was also one of



the reasons why the Mahārājā Ranjit Singh conquered Kashmir. The rest of the story is best told in Janet Rizvi's words:

'The ensuing famine [drove] many Kashmiri shawl weavers to seek their livelihood on the plains [of the Punjab], particularly in the towns of Amritsar, Nurpur and Ludhiana. [There were several famines in Kashmir in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The one of 1833-34 is perhaps the best documented.] In order to supply the growing demand from these places, a certain proportion of Western Tibet's pashmina had started being diverted down the Sutlej, through Spiti and Kinnaur [both in HP] to the plains, bypassing Kashmir altogether and thus further impoverishing its traditional industry. The development of this trade in smuggled wool was encouraged by the British, through whose territory [in HP] it must pass. They repaired the tracks used by the traders in Kinnaur, and offered the nomadic goatherds of Western Tibet higher prices than those fixed by the Ladākhi and Kashmiri monopolists.

'Both Ranjit Singh's own Government, and that of his most powerful vassal, the Dogrā Gulab Singh, Raja of Jammū, were alive to the importance of this trade. The establishment of the shawl industry in Amritsar and Nurpur, both towns within the Sikh empire, was a development that suited Ranjit, who also undertook to rehabilitate the traditional industry in Kashmir. Gulab Singh attempted to open a pashmina route to the plains via Kishtwār, one of the hill districts he ruled over; this elicited complaints to Ranjit from the Sikh governor of Kashmir.

'But Gulab Singh's ambitions went further than merely diversion of a part of this lucrative trade to his own territories. Ultimately he aimed at getting control over the entire pashmina producing area...'

It was thus that Amritsar came to be the place where pashmina shawls made in Basohli (and some in Kashmir) are 'calendered'. This was also one of the reasons why a Kashmiri diaspora developed in East as well as West Punjab, notably Lahore. Kashmiris based in Lahore were in the forefront of Kashmir's freedom struggle against the Dogrā Mahārājās, in the 1930s and 1940s. I suspect that in 1947, when Muslims migrated en masse from East Punjab, the Kashmiris living there did not return to Kashmir. Instead, they went to West Punjab (Pakistan), along with their other Muslim neighbours.

- iii) *Shahtoosh shawls*: 'Shah' means 'king' and this is the king of all shawls. By far the most expensive, too, mainly because its wool is so difficult to get.

The Tibetan antelope (*chiru* or *Pantholops Hodgsoni*) is only found at around 5,000 metres above the sea, where eastern Ladākhi meets the plateau of Tibet. In winter it grows a thick coat of 'under-wool' to protect itself from the extreme cold of the plateau. In summer, this very coat becomes



an irritant. Besides, fleas tend to gather inside it, adding to the irritation. Whenever the chiru feels itchy it scratches its throat and body on thorny bushes. In the process it leaves behind a few strands of hair on the thorns. Shepherds and farmers collect these hairs tuft by tuft. Obviously it takes ages to collect enough hair to make a single shawl with. Which is why these shawls are so expensive.

(The Chinese have spread the canard that the antelope is being killed on Chinese territory-for its wool. A spate of articles have appeared in support of this theory. All of them use the same photograph. So, obviously one or two such incidents might have taken place in Tibet. In Kashmir no one is so foolish as to kill the antelope that, so to speak, lays the golden hair. Which is why Kashmir had, till 2000, refused to ban trade in shahtoosh.

(More important, the hairs of the chiru start curling inwards as soon as it dies a natural or violent death. Such hairs yield inferior wool. Good shahtoosh can only be made from hairs left on thorny bushes by a living antelope.)

Pure shahtoosh yarn can be made to resemble silk yarn. Because shahtoosh shawls are woven loosely, it is very difficult to embroider pure shahtoosh. It is never dyed either: it would be foolish to tamper with the (brownish) colour of a material, the colour of which is an indicator of its snob value. These shawls are very light, soft and warm. Because they can pass through a ring, they are also called 'ring shawls'. Shahtoosh is sometimes blended with pashmina to make the shawl slightly more affordable.

Some 'ring shawls' are made of silk. This level of refinement was achieved during the Mughal era.

## 2) Classified According To Type Of Manufacture

There are another two kinds of shawls, distinguished by the type of their manufacture: *kâni* and *amalikâr*. *Kani* shawls are woven on looms. (See also 'Kani shawls of Kanihama' in the chapter on Budgâm.)

**Kâni shawls:** One kind of *kani* shawl uses *rafgar* 'embroidery'. It is made by seamlessly joining together several little pieces of pashmina. If done well, it should not be possible to make out that the shawl consists of tiny shreds. In some ways, the *kani* variety of shawls represents shawl-making at its grandest. On the one hand, the technique is very intricate. On the other, it imposes limits on the ornamentation of the shawl. This kind of shawl was also made in Persia and parts of Central Asia.

Ghulâm Muhammad 'Kânihâmâ' was one private entrepreneur who tried to keep this tradition alive in the twentieth century. He died in 2001. The patronage of the Central and State governments helped. The Government of India commissioned him to make eight shawls for them, at prices ranging from one to two lakh rupees each. They are so expensive because it takes



two artisans, working together, two and a half years each to make a single kani shawl. And it takes so long partly because no knitting needles are used, only wooden instruments.

These shawls can be the last word in sobriety, are extremely brightly coloured. Their colours range from sober greys and regal purples and violets to vibrant mustard yellows.

**Amali/ amli/ amilkar/ amalikâr (paisley) shawls** are made up of countless, almost invisible, little stitches that cover the entire area in a grand pattern. The amli shawl is really a 19<sup>th</sup> century variant of the kani shawl. Rehman and Jafri write, 'The Amli shal is important because it gave a new lease of life to the Kashmîrî shal in a different form, which again remained inimitable to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.'

The main difference between the two is that the amli shawl is embroidered. Patterns are woven into kâni shawls on the loom itself.

Rehman and Jafri mention a third category, the 'Combination Shal, which represents a 19<sup>th</sup> century transition between two defining techniques,' i.e. the kâni and the amli.

They also refer to another category, namely Dealer-Crafted Shawls, which were 'a twentieth century adaptation of antique shal fragments crafted onto new pieces enabling them to be worn as wearable stoles and shals.'

**Sizes:** There are two standard sizes, male (3 yards by 1.5 yards) and female (2 yards x 1 yard).

**Embroidery:** The amount of embroidery on a shawl can vary. 'Dor-dâr' shawls are embroidered at the two extreme ends only. These borders can be narrow or wide. The most commonly found motifs are almonds and Chinâr-leaves. In addition, sometimes thread is laid out on the four corners. 'Bootey wâla shawls' have flowers and saplings embroidered on them. These motifs are scattered all over the main body of the shawl, at regular intervals. These flowers and saplings can be small (*fali kâr*) or big.

If the amount of embroidery on a shawl is quite considerable, it is known as a *jâmâ* or *jâmâ-vâr* shawl. Within the *jâmâ* family, the ones with relatively little embroidery are known as *jâli wâlâ jâmâ*.

There are two kinds of embroidery: i) Shawls with perfunctory and scanty embroidery are known as *vatta chicken*. This kind of work is mostly done on shawls made of ruffle/ raffal, ii) If the embroidery is richly concentrated and the threads firmly embedded in the shawl, it is known as *reiz gâri*. ('Reiz' is like the English 'raise' or 'raze'.) This is the kind of work normally done on pashmina. The pattern is the same on both sides of the shawl: there is no 'negative' of the pattern on the reverse. Such shawls can be worn either way and are known as 'double sided shawls'. (See also 'Embroidery' above: *do-rukha*.)



*Shawls are embroidered the sozni way in all six districts of the Valley namely, Anāñnāg, Bâramullâ, Budgām, Kupwârâ, Pulwâmâ and Srinagar.*

*Shawls, pashmina as well as ruffle, are made in the Mashadi Mohalla and Mughal Masjid areas of Srinagar city. They are sold everywhere in Kashmir Jammû and even Ladâkh. Shops in Jammû and Ladâkh often tend to stock Kashmiri shawls rather than the local variety.*



# 17

## The Wâzwân

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### The ceremony

The wedding guests sit cross-legged on spotless sheets spread on the ground. Men and women sit in separate tents. There are unlikely to be many children present.

A young man, a member of the family and not an employee, enters with a roll of white cloth which he starts unrolling expertly along the sides of the tent, in a rectangle. The guests start forming foursomes, seating themselves on either side of this white strip, which is about three feet (a metre) wide.

A few minutes later comes an attendant carrying an elaborate steel contraption, shaped somewhat like an hourglass, around two feet tall and about fifteen inches wide. The top half would have been filled with lukewarm water. There is a little tap in the middle, and a receptacle in the lower half to receive the waste water. There is also a niche for soap. The attendant takes this *tasht-nâri* from guest to guest for them to wash their hands in. (Most *tasht nâris* since the 1990s have come in two pieces. The top, with the clean water, looks like a samovar. It is increasingly no longer attached to the ornamental base into which the dirty water flows.)

Now a silent procession begins to form outside the tent. These are male, able bodied relatives of the host, all normally dressed in white traditional dress. (The dress worn, increasingly since 1980, is the Punjabi *shalwar-qameez*. It was invented by the Sikhs and is now the national dress of Pakistan. It is, therefore, mistakenly identified with Islâm.) Each man holds at waist level a large and heavy copper plate, the *trâmi*, covered with an equally ornately patterned and heavy copper lid, the *sar-posh*. These men start moving wordlessly, in single file, towards the guests, depositing one *trâmi* between each foursome.

The tent, though filled with guests, is quite noiseless. Most people jokingly say that this is because everyone is so busy eating (and racing through that



course before the next one arrives) that they have no time to talk. My theory is that it is because of the way the guests sit. They do talk to each other but only to the three persons in their group. There is no cross-talk over distances. As a result voices automatically drop to a level where only that foursome, and not the next foursome, can hear them.

When all the foursomes have been given their *trâmis* the silence is broken by one of the elders, who says 'Bismillah' (In the name of God) and lifts the *sarposh* (lid) of his *trâmi*. Under a tissue paper would have been placed a huge quantity of steaming hot rice with at least four mutton items and large pieces of chicken placed on it. These mutton items are four portions of *mayth-mâz* (chopped intestines), two large seekh ('sheesh') kababs, two strips of rib called *tabaq mâz*, and two gigantic pieces of chicken.

This 'Bismillah' is also a signal for the other guests to remove the lids (sar-poshes) of their *trâmis* and start eating. Thus begins the banquet called the *wazwan* (pron. wâz-wân). The *trâmi*, and therefore the bed of rice on it, can be up to three or four inches deep. This circular plate is almost 20 inches wide, to enable each of the four guests assigned to that *trâmi* to have an independent corner.

The custom of four people eating from the same plate is definitely Islâmic and Central and West Asian. It is the Sufis of Delhi, notably Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya [d.1325], who introduced among Indian Muslims the practice of eating from separate plates. This made a Muslim prince from the Deccan wonder if Hazrat Nizamuddin was a Muslim at all. The Auliya explained that he had started the practice of one-man, one-plate because he had several Hindu disciples who could not get themselves to eat from the same plate as even fellow Hindus.

The Kashmiris, too, serve their non-Muslim guests in individual plates.

Very few of the dishes are served in four portions: *mayth mâz* and the *rista* are among these few. Most dishes are served in two portions (e.g. *tabaq mâz*, chicken and the seekh kabab). Just one (albeit huge) portion is served of some dishes (like the *goshtaba*). Therefore, these have to be broken into four portions by hand. Those portions are very large by any standards. All dishes in the *wazwan* are eaten by hand.

Barely would the guests have nibbled at the mutton preparations that came placed on the rice than an attendant (this time it won't be a member of the host's family) will arrive with a huge cauldron and pour out four portions of another mutton dish (normally the *rista*) on each *trâmi*.

And before this new dish can be eaten, yet another mutton preparation will arrive and be ladled onto your *trâmi*.



This process will go on till generous portions of around twenty-one different mutton dishes are put on your plate, whether you want them or not. Unlike in a buffet, where you take as much as you want, or even at a sit-down banquet where you can tell the server that you want no more, at a *wazwan* you have no choice. Once you sit before a *trâmi*, around two kilograms of mutton and chicken (not counting the rice, vegetables, salad and chutneys) will be put on your plate for each person, or 8 kg per *trami*. If you can't eat it all, just leave it behind.

(Or take it home in a doggy bag, as some women have always done. Since the 1980s, hosts have started handing out polythene bags in the women's tent because they know that few women can eat all that is served. The only choice that men have is to skip the lunch before and the breakfast after the *wazwan*.)

Till September 1989, the *wazwan* would be served around midnight (the lateness of the hour whets the appetite further). Kashmir was uniquely free of crime. Female guests, loaded with gold jewellery, would leave wedding feasts around one or two a.m. and walk home in all-female groups without any fear.

Kashmir ceased to be a paradise in the 1990s. Everyone wanted to be home by seven or eight in the evening. Therefore, *wazwans* were shifted to the afternoon. Conditions began to improve in the late 1990s. Once again *wazwans* started shifting back to dinner: to around eight or nine p.m. Midnight *wazwans* have not yet resumed, though.

Cow slaughter is banned in all of Jammû and Kashmir and the Kashmiris are not fond of goats' meat. Therefore, the *wazwan* is essentially a binge of sheep's mutton. The solitary chicken dish was introduced in the 1940s or '50s. Despite the abundance of trout and other excellent varieties of fish in the Valley, fish is not part of this lavish banquet. However, it includes half a dozen chutneys, lots of curds and maybe four vegetarian dishes, plus mineral water and, often, a cola.

### Economic and social costs

Before 1947, the Valley of Kashmir was a net exporter of meat: on hoof. Today it has the country's highest per capita consumption of mutton. Which is hardly surprising, considering that each guest at a *wazwan* eats six to eight times as much meat as Indians elsewhere consume at a feast.

In 1993, I did a little study of the mutton trade. Every day 10,000 sheep were transported to the Valley, mostly from Rajasthan (Alwar in particular). Entire sections of Delhi's Lajpat Nagar, Defence Colony and Khân Market are inhabited by those involved in this trade. In 1993, I estimated the value of the mutton trade at roughly Rs. 500 crore a year. In the year 2003, the



figure would be around Rs. 2,000 crore a year. Not surprisingly, the trade used to wield considerable political clout in Kashmir.

Till one man decided to take on the mutton lobby (the *kothd  rs*), that is, Mohd. Shafi Pandit, a young IAS officer, then the Divisional Commissioner of Kashmir, took the lobby on to control the price of mutton. He also helped launch the Samaj Sudhar (social reform) movement in 1986. Eminent doctors joined him and went on Doordarshan to explain the benefits of vegetarianism and the ill-effects of a non-vegetarian diet.

Indeed, all this mutton consumption comes with a huge price tag: in terms of health as well as social evils. Kashmir tops national averages for several mutton-related diseases, including gout and forms of stomach cancer.

More important, even lower-middle class Kashmiris have since the 1950s felt obliged to host one or two *wazwans* during the course of a lifetime: especially on the occasion of a daughter's wedding. Well to do Kashmiris also look for other excuses to host *wazwans*, a son's wedding being the commonest of the lot. A favourite saint's annual day and thanksgiving for boons received from God are increasingly common reasons. Those who can afford to, host smaller *wazwans*, for twenty to thirty close friends and relatives, without having to look for justifications.

Till the 1990s the *w    * (chef) would charge as his fee the price of one kilogram of meat for every kilo of meat that he would cook. Thus if you gave him 150 kg. of meat to cook (which is typical), his fee would be equal to the cost of 150 kg. of meat. However, by the year 2000 this had changed. Most *w    s* now charge one and a half times the cost of the meat that they cook.

The main *wazwan* at a wedding costs at least seventy-five thousand rupees. Most middle-to upper-middle class weddings consist of a series of three to five *wazwans* (though not all of them for as many guests as at the main *wazwan*). The cost of the lot could be around two lakh rupees. Therefore, the whole thing can ruin the host economically.

A lot of the food goes waste. Most male guests eat around three-quarters of the meat and less than a quarter of the huge quantities of curds served. Since the 1990s one cola drink per guest and one 1.5 litre bottle of mineral water (with four plastic cups) per foursome has become the norm, adding to the expense-and wastage. Once someone somewhere in Srinagar introduces a new item into the *wazwan* (e.g. cola drinks and mineral water), everyone follows suit. No one wants to be considered a cheapskate.

The Samaj Sudhar movement helped restrict not only the number of guests that could be invited to a wedding feast to around a dozen, but also the number of mutton dishes that could be served. Anyone found violating this would be boycotted socially.



This sent a wave of relief among the middle classes of Kashmir who, in the past, would not dare defy societal norms by serving fewer dishes or fewer guests than their neighbours or relatives had. (In a custom not unlike the Latin American *pot lach*, Kashmiris ensure that the drains outside their houses are choked with rice after the feast. Empty drains are taken to indicate that the host was a miser and there wasn't anything left over after the *wazwan*. Fortunately, this custom is dying out.)

For a couple of years Samaj Sudhar worked like a dream. The movement had not exactly sprung out of nowhere. In the mid-1970s the state government had issued a 'guest control' order, restricting the number of guests you could invite as well as the number of dishes that you could serve. At least on paper this still remains the law. It's a different thing that few Kashmiris are aware of its existence.

After all, Kashmir is the land of the food snob; and thus of the celebrity chef. Gourmets would taste a single morsel and identify the *wāza* who had cooked it.

The Khosa family, the Bhandâris, Ahad Waza and Mom Waza are the chefs most sought after these days. A few months before the wedding season you will find elite fathers and brothers queuing up at the houses of these maestros in the Wāzpura area of Srinagar, to book them well in advance.

Parents are known to postpone marriages if their favourite *wāza* is not available on that day. Similarly, flying a favourite cook to Bangalore (which now has a substantial Kashmiri diaspora) is hardly rare. Delhi, of course, has a resident *wāza*, who has acquired the sobriquet '*Dilli wāza*'.

In such an atmosphere can you seriously expect social reform to flourish? By 1989, the Sudhar movement had evaporated. In 1990, several groups of militants introduced their own version of guest control. In that surcharged atmosphere it worked: till around 1993.

At each *wazwan* that I attend I find some 'new' dish or the other. Many of these are part of the original 105-course *wazwan*, which had been pruned to a 'mere' twenty or twenty-one mutton dishes till a few decades ago.

At the rate at which old dishes are being 'revived', it shouldn't be long before the entire 'original' *wazwan* is resurrected. And fathers bankrupted.

As with all revivalism, some of that which is sought to be revived probably never existed and, if it did, was restricted to royalty and, maybe, a handful of nobles. Mahārājā Hari Singh had a chef who wouldn't cook the same dessert twice in a year. (After Kashmir acceded to India the chef joined the Raj Bhavan, where this author too has served.) Now, this does not mean that there were 365 (leave alone 730) desserts in Dogrā cuisine or even that the other chefs of the state knew that many recipes. It only tells us about one single chef's repertoire. (In any case this chef came from Bengal, the capital of India's desserts.)



What we know for certain, from British records, is that even in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/ early 20<sup>th</sup> century the *wazas* could cook around fifty meat dishes, in addition to chutneys and vegetarian dishes. However, it is doubtful if all the fifty dishes were ever served together at a single meal even in that era. Not to mention the new dishes that *wazas* so proudly keep inventing to this day.

While the not-so-well off find themselves compelled to host at least middling *wazwans* (which, too, are very expensive), those with money to burn use *wazwans* as occasions to flaunt their money, sometimes offensively. Not content with all the innovations that they have introduced into the food, they sometimes place hard cash under the *tr  mi*, for the guests to take home. (Rs.400 per *tr  mi* was the going rate in the year 2003.)

People all over India throw flowers on the bridegroom and his relatives, when they enter the bride's house. The Kashmiris shower their guests with dry fruits (and, increasingly, toffees) as well. At one *wazwan* I found ten rupee notes, folded into little fans, among the dry fruits that we had been showered with.

### Origin and spread

Where did the *wazwan* originate? This is a question that continues to agitate all thinking Kashmiris. Everyone assumes that like so many other fine things (notably the khatamband ceiling, mosque architecture and carpets) gourmet cooking came to Kashmir from Central Asia: from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan or Iran. Perhaps it did. The *tr  mi*, the *sar posh* and the *tasht n  ri* belong to the same family of handicrafts as the Central Asian samovar. However, the problem is that none of these Central Asian countries has a banquet even remotely resembling the *wazwan*.

Of course, several Kashmiri dishes have a Central Asian equivalent. But that is also true of the Mughlai food of the Indian and Pakistani plains. On the other hand a large number of dishes served in the (Muslim) *wazwan* have a corresponding Kashmiri Pandit version, notably the *tabaq m  zl qaberg  h*, the *martsgand* and the *roghan josh*. Several dishes (e.g. *nadroo* and *h  k s  g*) are purely Kashmiri.

Therefore, it is tempting to conclude that the *wazwan* was invented by Kashmiri Muslims perhaps in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, borrowing a few dishes from Central Asia, Iran and the plains of India. That the feast has an Indian name, born of a Sanskrit prefix and a Kashmiri suffix, also indicates its likely origins. (See below.)

The community of *w  zas* is found only in Srinagar City. In the small towns and villages the local baker (*n  nb  i*) doubles as chef at weddings. Since around 1950, almost all ethnic Kashmiris, rich and poor, have felt obliged to host *wazwans* at least as part of their daughters' wedding feasts.



However, perhaps this was not always so. Kashmîr was one of the poorest parts of India before 1947. Only well to do families of Srinagar City could host *wazwans*. Rural and small town elites had to import chefs from Srinagar City, which was not always easy. Kashmîr did not 'import' mutton from other parts of the country till the 1960s. The *wazwan* was thus not always as widespread as it has been since the 1950s.

In the 1970s, it spread to Jammû as well. Ethnic Kashmîris living in Jammû province were the first to take to it. By the late 1980s, even the Punjabi-speaking Muslims of Jammû had adopted the custom.

Individual dishes from the *wazwan* have been influencing the cuisine of neighbouring regions since at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *yakhni* has at least since then been part of the everyday food of the Hindus of Jammû. The cuisine of the Muslims of the Punjab, Jammû and Ladâkh has drawn even more deeply from Kashmîr.

In the 1990s, Kashmîris, Hindus and Muslims alike, fled to Jammû and the Indian plains. With them went some *wazas*. In 1993, I launched an aggressive publicity campaign, through television and the press, as well as food festivals in Delhi and Bombay, to popularise the *wazwan* outside Kashmîr. I believe that I succeeded.

At least some rich Hindus of Delhi hosted *wazwans* at their children's weddings in the 1990s.

### Scientific basis

Eating a *wazwan* in Delhi (or Jammû) is not the same as doing so in Kashmîr. It is so much more difficult to eat two kilos of meat in a single meal in the warmer plains, except perhaps in winter. Kashmîri water has a strong mineral content and helps digest all those mounds of food better.

Even within Kashmîr the same food, made by the same chef, doesn't taste the same if served in a buffet. That's because dishes of the *wazwan* are served in a particular order. This sequence is the result of several centuries of experience.

Let us assume that there are 21 meat dishes in the *wazwan* that you are eating. By the eighth or ninth dish your stomach will begin to complain and you will be filled with dread at the thought of the dishes that remain. Just then the chef will bring you a dish designed to soothe your stomach and prepare it for the rest of the feast. (Incidentally, all ice creams, especially the humble vanilla, do the same trick after a heavy meal.)

Another result of these centuries of experience is the system of washing the raw mutton with turmeric, which is an antiseptic and rids the mutton of several kinds of germs.



Shredded radish is invariably served at all *wazwans*. Radish rids the tongue of the flavour of the dish last eaten. Therefore, it is eaten between courses so that your palate can savour the taste of the next dish the better.

Also between courses one of the foursome will serve curds to the other three. He will serve the yoghurt with a spoon and the other three will receive it on their fingers. This is because curds dissolve the grease left behind on the fingers by the previous dish. Try it with food from any part of the world. Curds really clean up the fingers.

Sugar has traditionally been rare in Kashmir (and in Ladâkh and Tibet). That's why there are no indigenous sweet dishes in these three regions. Their tea is mostly salt-flavoured. Habba Khatoon's 16<sup>th</sup> century poetry clearly states that sugar and sweets were the preserve of the rich in Kashmir. Of the three regions mentioned, Kashmir was the first to receive sugar in a big way. This was around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*Phirni*, a dessert favoured by the Muslims of the Indian plains, quickly became very popular, especially during the holy month of Ramzan, when fasts are broken by eating some *phirni*. Since Kashmir has no sweets of its own, *phirni* has since the 19<sup>th</sup> century been the most popular dessert served after a *wazwan*. Because it is not part of the old tradition, since the 1990s it has often been replaced by slices of ice cream.

The Kashmiris' own way of completing the *wazwan* feast is with the *goshtaba*, a huge ball of pounded meat, cooked in yoghurt. It is sliced into four with a flat sharp bone that had emerged from one of the previous dishes, the Aab Gosh, after the meat had been removed.

## The dishes

The word '*wâza*' is derived from the Sanskrit '*vâj*' (cook). '*Wân*' is the Kashmiri word for 'shop'. However, *wazwan* is no shop. It is, as we have seen, a feast, a banquet, prepared in the host's courtyard, where the '*wâza*', specially hired to cook that meal, sets up shop, so to speak.

For various reasons the all-India trend of hosting wedding receptions at luxury hotels hasn't caught on in Kashmir. For one, that would send costs, already very high, skyrocketing. Secondly, none of the luxury hotels in Kashmir has a celebrity *waza* in its employ. Then the whole ceremony takes so long that the host would need to book the hotel for far longer than in the rest of India. Most important, at home the host can exercise a degree of control over the ceremony that is not possible in a hotel.

Today the word '*wazwan*' has come to describe the multi-course, sit-down Kashmiri banquet.



The twenty-odd mutton dishes of the average *wazwan* are served in a particular order: which has to do with the digestive process itself. Just when you feel that you can take no more, along comes a dish designed to soothe your innards, or another to rekindle your appetite.

### Some dishes

*Mayth Māz*: Finely chopped intestines of sheep, fried in oil with dried fenugreek (*methi*).

*Kebab*: Minced meat cooked on long skewers. Only the *seekh* (*sheesh*) kebab is supposed to be served at weddings. However, since the late 1990s, even *shāmi* (evening) kebabs have entered the menu, even if the *wazwan* is served at lunchtime. (In the Indian plains it is considered sacrilegious-and upstart behaviour-to serve *shāmi* kebabs before sunset.)

*Tabaq māz*: Ribs of sheep cut into small rectangles and fried in ghee.

*Rista*: Brown meat ball. The mutton, instead of being minced with a metal knife, is pounded on a stone slab with a wooden mallet (hammer). Cooked with spices. Each meat ball serves one.

*Goshtābā*: Synonymous with the *wazwan*, and is its last dish. This, too, is a ball of meat, but is huge (serves four). Here, once again, a mallet is used to pound the meat, which is beaten till it turns white and is then cooked in boiling curds. Spices are not used. The ball is of a pistachio-grey colour.

*Marts Vāngan Qorma*: Small pieces of mutton, cooked with red chillies and spices. Chilli-hot. Therefore, to be eaten with curds.

*Dāna Val Qorma*: Meat from the breast of the sheep. When ready, sweet curds and green coriander (*dhaniya*) are added to it before serving.

*Roghar Josh*: Large bones with flesh attached, cooked in ghee and reddened with saffron and other spices.

*Aab Gosh*: How good a chef is can be tested by how well he makes *Aab Gosh*. Cooked in milk, with cardamom and *dār* (*dār*, not *dāl*) *cheeni*, but without any *haldi* (turmeric). It is served at a stage when the guests are about to give up. Its soothing syrup perks them up and keeps them going for the remaining part of the feast.

*Paneer*: Large rectangles of cottage cheese, several times the size we'd serve in central India, cooked in tomato paste.

*Hāk sāg*: The Kashmiri lettuce, cooked, unfortunately, in far too much oil.

*Nadru*: Stem of the lotus. Increasingly disappearing from the menu.

*Bam tsunt*: The quince apple, cooked in a tangy, sweet and sour sauce.



## Kashmîrî Painting'

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*(First of all a disclaimer: I, the author, have had absolutely no formal training of any kind in art. Yet I have, since 1980, had an extremely deep involvement with one of India's best known schools of miniature painting. Upon joining the Indian Administrative Service, for my first posting I volunteered to serve in Basohli as the Sub Divisional Magistrate and Collector, with the express intention of reviving the Basohli school which became extinct in 1857. After a year of study, fieldwork and touring I was able to achieve my dream. On Dussehrâ day 1980, a hundred and twenty three years after his ancestors had left Basohli (for Amritsar, then Lahore and finally Rait (in Chambâ, HP) a scion of the Rainâ family of artists returned to Basohli. The school that I started in Basohli has flourished. Its alumni have since gone on to establish branches in places as far apart as Udhampur, Jammû and Kathuâ.*

*Personally, this has meant that for quite a few young scholars in this field my official residences in Srinagar and Jammû have become the first port of call. It was while helping out one such scholar from Harvard that I stumbled upon a series of illustrated manuscripts and stand-alone paintings in three different archives of Srinagar.)*

Mridu Rai called me from New York to ask about Kashmîrî miniatures.<sup>1</sup>

There's no such thing as a Kashmîrî miniature, I told her.<sup>2</sup> Only Mughal and Persian miniatures painted in Kashmîr, and Perso-Mughal and Hindu-Buddhist paintings executed by Kashmîrîs outside Kashmîr (mainly in Ladâkh, Afghânistân and Delhi-Agra). Certainly no Kashmîrî school.

1 Dr. Rai is a Yale historian. She was then at Columbia University, working on a doctoral dissertation on 'Kashmîrî Identity and Notions of Sovereignty.' The eminent Pâkistâni scholar Ayesha Jalal was her guide.

2 And that is what I was told by every scholar that I met, in Kashmîr or elsewhere (with three-exceptions).



Mridu said that she'd stumbled upon a reference to the effect that a school of miniature painting had briefly flourished in Kashmîr from 1810 to 1830. (In the history of Kashmîr this era is generally known as the Sikh period.)

Wait a minute, I told Mridu. I know what you are talking about and I know exactly how to find those miniatures.

In the weeks preceding that call from Mridu I had been working with a talented team of scholars from the Jammû and Kashmîr (J&K) Academy of Culture and Arts (aka the Cultural Academy). They were helping me look for damaged miniature paintings which a Harvard-retained Indian scholar had promised to restore.

Most of these miniatures were what you could call Kashmîr-Made Exotic<sup>3</sup> Miniatures: reproductions of Persian and Mughal miniatures done in Kashmîr by local artists. However, tucked away amidst them were paintings which clearly belonged to the Kashmîrî Qalam. To wit, they were Kashmîr-Made Kashmîrî Miniatures. (Qalam literally means 'quill' or 'pen'. In Indian art it refers to a school or style of art: e.g. the Basohli qalam, the Kângrâ qalam, and so on.)

Mridu's information made me sit up and wonder if Kashmîr might, after all, have had a qalam of its own.

Back I was at the Cultural Academy, from which I obtained a list of all the manuscripts that they had. After wading through their almost 900-page Urdu catalogue, I came upon references to six illustrated manuscripts penned in Kashmîr on Kashmîrî paper, even though some of these were copies of Persian or Mughal books. One of the illustrated manuscripts was painted as late as in the 1860s. So already we had managed to extend the known limits of this school by three decades.

In addition, the Academy had an album of more than 60 miniature paintings, all of them on Kashmîrî paper and, thus, certainly made locally.

What the catalogue did was to establish Mridu's (and Ayesha Jalal's) a priori contention-and take its boundaries further. The contention was that it was simply not possible for a people as incredibly talented as the Kashmîrîs to not have had their own school of painting. Their architecture and handicrafts have no equal in the sub-continent and their 21 to 50-course wedding feast is a major art form in itself. So why would they not have had their own school of painting?

Meanwhile, Mridu came upon a reference to a treasure-trove of Kashmîrî miniatures in Leningrad, which, in the 19th century, found its way to Russia, through Germany. She later sent me a photocopy of the 84-page

3 'Exotic' literally means 'of foreign origin'.



text of a Russian book by A. Adamova and T. Greck, which has been translated as 'Miniatures from Kashmirian Manuscripts.'

I started talking about these exciting findings. And information started pouring in. A senior police officer told me that someone had once come to him to discuss the legal aspects of a medieval copy that he possessed of the *Kathā Sarit Sāgar*. I haven't yet laid my paws on a copy of this but its Persian version, '*Anwaar o Suheyli*,' is available in some Kashmiri libraries and archives.

A Kashmiri Pandit journalist told me of her family's old puja-(prayer) miniatures, which had decayed because of smoke from the puja diya (prayer lamp). I followed up this lead and found half a dozen mediaeval Pandit puja miniatures.

The most important lead was to the 70-year old former 'head moulvi' of Srinagar's Persian-language archives, a walking encyclopaedia called Moulvi Ghulam Rasool Bhatt, who gave me access to at least 900 purely Kashmiri miniatures, and has helped me date them to the nearest century. (And what centuries!)

My other major research associate has been Mr. Ashraf, a young expert working for the J&K Cultural Academy, who has helped me date the miniatures in his office archives, and also to establish what is distinctly Kashmiri about them.

### The Six Periods

The following is an analysis of what I have been to find between these two archives and Srinagar's SPS Museum.

Kashmir had a flourishing tradition of miniature painting that lasted till the early 20th century. This tradition has largely gone unrecognised. Only half a dozen archivists (e.g. Messrs. Ghulam Rasool Bhatt, Ashraf and Mir Jamshed Ahmed) are even aware of it. Next to no work had been done on this tradition till I announced my findings to the national press in October 1997. Around half a dozen scholars in India and abroad know of Perso-Mughal paintings done in Kashmir. Only two papers that I had come across till then (Adamova-Greck and Karuna Goswamy) had even speculated about the possibility of a Kashmir school. (Mrs. Goswamy's book was published in 1998.)

I have tentatively divided the evolution of this art into six periods, as follows:

i) *The ancient period* (from the beginning of human settlement in Kashmir to, say, the thirteenth century AD): Illustrated Saṁskṛit-Shārdā manuscripts as well as 'stand alone' paintings were created during this period. There are several references (wonderful anecdotal evidence) in the *Kathā Sarit Sāgar*



and the *Nilmat Purân* to portraits and other paintings. However, I have not yet come across a single extant portable painting from this period. Nor has any other researcher. Not yet. But I am still looking.

It is known in Kashmir that during the pre-Islamic period Kashmiri artists went to Ladâkh and Afghânistân. There they created some brilliant works of Hindu-Buddhist art. The surviving miniatures are all painted on walls or doors. None of this art is on a portable substance like paper, parchment or cloth. Kashmiri sculptors carved gigantic statues (mainly of the Buddhâ) on mountainsides. Again not portable.

Several scholars, mainly erudite Kashmiri Pandits, have written books about the art of this period, based on works found in Ladâkh, Tibet and Afghânistân.

ii) *Kashmir under its own Sultans* (1320-1586): This phase consisted of botanical and zoological paintings and, by the mid-1500s, human portraits. All these paintings are in colour. Mr. Ghulam Rasool Bhatt helped me gain access to a copy of a book that was begun in the 1370s. I have got photographed (by my colleague Shishu Pal) a better-preserved copy of the same book, which was copied in 1430.

The oldest 'portable' painting by a Kashmiri that I have seen (and, I believe, the oldest extant Kashmiri paper-painting), thus, dates to the 1370s.

With effort it should be possible to locate a copy of the *Kathâ Sarit Sâgar* copied during this pre-Mughal period. (The one that I have seen, Anwaar Suheyli, dates to the 18/19th century.)

In any case Mr. Ashraf helped me study some Hindu religious paintings (e.g. the Shankarachârya pantheon) which probably dates to the 15th century (and certainly not later than the 16th.)

Thus we now have evidence that painting flourished in Kashmir well before the Mughals.

This is an extremely important point for those who believe that painting came to Kashmir only along with the likes of Mohd Nadir of Samarqand (who perhaps belonged to the seventeenth century).

iii) *The Mughal period* (including the minor Mughal kings: 1586-1752): This period of painting in Kashmir (often by Kashmiris) alone has been written about. However, even this period has not been adequately researched and very few scholars are familiar with it. During this period Kashmir became one of the many provinces of the Mughals and its art became one of the many variants of the Mughal school.

Some very fine work was done in Kashmir (by Kashmiri as well as non-Kashmiri artists) and by Kashmiri artists in the Mughal court (e.g. the *Némat Nâmâ* during Akbar's time). However, the Mughal period smothered the indigenous identity of Kashmir's paintings.



iv) *The post-Mughal period* (late 18th to mid 19th Century): This is the period when a distinctly Kashmiri school began to flourish all over again. I don't think this period has been documented at all. The *T  rikh    Birbal K  chri* has a number of wholly Kashmiri paintings: the themes, the locations, the paper, the artists-they were all Kashmiri.

v) *The Kashmir counterpart of the Company school* (Late 19th century): Either Englishmen, or Kashmiris influenced by the British, painted miniatures on Kashmiri paper, using Kashmiri themes, but stylistically very European. For instance, there would be sketches: in colour but with no backdrop at all or with a very sparse background. The genres included portraits and ethnographic pictures.

Neither the (East India) Company nor the Raj ever ruled the Valley of Kashmir (or Jamm  ) directly. What the major part of the state instead had during the colonial era was a British Resident. So, perhaps, this sub-school should be called *the Residency School*.

vi) In the 19th century there was a commingling of Dogr   and Kashmiri themes and styles. (I have all of one colour painting, but several b&w sketches to show for this period.)

### What is uniquely Kashmir   about these paintings?

1) *The paper*: This is a soft and slightly spongy white paper. (Basohli-K  n  r   paper, on the other hand, was made from the recycled sheets of bahis [account books], and was very thick and stiff.)

Scholar Karuna Goswamy describes 'hand-made paper of the Kashmiri kind' as 'quite thin and bearing that distinctive glaze that comes from being made from rice husk in the Kashmiri tradition'.

G. Forster, writing in 1798, noted that, 'the Kashmirians (sic) fabricate the best writing paper in the East.'

This paper was made in the K  gaz-gar mohallas of Naushera and Jama Masjid. (So if we are to revive Kashmir's great miniature painting tradition, we should begin with reviving this paper's manufacture.) The paper is washable in water.

There are many legends from Budshah's time about this paper's unique qualities. Alterations (forgeries) made on documents written on it could be detected because scratch marks left on the paper by the nib of the pen would remain even after the ink had been washed off.

The outlines of figures were made on Kashmiri paper with a brush dipped in plain water (yes, just water) which would leave a brush mark, into which colours were later filled.

Whenever during my researches a doubt arose about whether a manuscript or a painting available in Srinagar was a Persian original or a copy made in



Kashmîr, Mr. Ghulam Rasool Bhatt, Mr. Ashraf and I would use a simple yardstick: is the paper Kashmîrî?

As we will see below, if a painting shows a person wearing a pheran or dajehroo (ear-chain), or sailing in a shikârâ, or sitting near a chinâr tree, then there can be no doubt that the painting is Kashmîrî.

But often the clothes or trees (or themes) shown in a painting have nothing to do with Kashmîr. In such cases we look for Kashmîrî borders and colours.

But again the borders varied over the centuries. The kind of colours used did not change to the same extent, but in some paintings they are too faded to tell us with certainty if the painting is indeed Kashmîrî.

Therefore the one clinching question that needs to be asked is: Is the paper used in the painting Kashmîrî?

2) *Borders*: Each 'school' (qalam) of miniature painting has a distinct type of border around the main picture. Thus Basohli borders are almost an inch wide and 'hot red.' Kângrâ borders are equally wide but softer pink. But then the Basohli qalam lasted only for around a century and only in the Basohli area. The Kângrâ qalam flourished for another hundred years or so.

The Kashmîrî paintings that I have studied cover almost six centuries and six fairly distinct phases. They include both 'stand alone' miniatures as well as miniatures which are integrated into manuscripts. Hence it would be unfair to expect any one standard type of border to span all six centuries for which Kashmîrî miniatures are available.

Hindu themes, presumably painted by Hindu artists, are normally enclosed within a slim (1 cm. or so wide) black (or blue-black) border, within which floral motifs have been drawn throughout. These designs are similar to the ones Kashmîrî Pandit ladies make on festive occasions (mainly Shivrâtrî and weddings).

In manuscripts (and now we are talking of text pages, not paintings), Kashmîrî borders have a very different identity. Some manuscript borders are simply dazzling because of all the gold/ golden colour used. To begin with, there would be a border around the text itself. Then there would be one outer margin, golden or blue. This would be in three or even four strips, each of a different colour: blue (outermost strip), white, golden, and then blue again (innermost strip).

This is not so in the manuscripts of the other Indian schools. Some people mistake Kashmîrî borders for Persian ones: but the latter are quite different.

The columns of text in Kashmîrî manuscripts use a lot of golden colour, and even the arrangement of columns is distinct in Kashmîr. Manuscripts do not concern us as such but if a manuscript can be said to be definitely



Kashmiri, then it becomes easier to say that the paintings in that manuscript too are Kashmiri. (Easier, not certain.)

There are other Kashmiri borders, too. For instance, in painting no. 59 (in the album at the Cultural Academy), 'Krishna dancing with Gopies,' there are three borders. The outer two are deep red and thick, the outermost (red) separated from the middle (also red) by two thin white lines. The innermost border is black with a floral motif of the Shivrātri/ Pandit-wedding type mentioned above.

Finally, some Kashmiri miniatures have borders that the artist did not give them. That is because older paintings have been pasted on top of newer, coloured paper which is both bigger and stiffer. The painting is pasted skillfully (and seamlessly) in the exact centre of the larger sheet below.

Because the stiff sheet below the painting is much bigger, a portion of the lower, coloured (dull pink or dull blue) sheet remains uncovered by the painting. This uncovered portion becomes a kind of a two-inch (or wider) border on each of the four sides. Abstract little specks of gold-leaf, which have been ground into very thin pieces, have been stuck on this 'border' at several dozen places.

(The painting is pasted so smoothly on this stiffer sheet that you have to run the tip of your finger along the outer edges of the painting to determine whether it has been pasted or painted on the lower sheet.)

3) *Colours*: Basohli colours are what art historians call 'extremely hot' (i.e. deep and bright). Kāñgrā colours are softer. Neither goes in much for shades or gradation of colour.

Kashmiri colours are soft, subtle, diverse, many, and, because of their variety, as close to Western colours as any that I have seen in the Perso-Indian tradition.

Kashmiri paintings-especially portraits-also happen to be among the most realistic in the East (a hemisphere from Egypt to China where realism has never been much prized in the plastic arts). The subtlety and diversity of Kashmiri colours has helped achieved this realism.

The yellow used is made of 'haldi' (turmeric). The red skirt of Goddess Durga (painting no. 65, Cultural Academy) is made of sindoor powder. In many of the early 19th century paintings (e.g. *Tārīkh e Birbal Kāchrū*) and even in older miniatures available with the Academy, a very deep 'lapis' blue is used, especially to depict the skies. Gold is another colour used aplenty in Kashmiri miniatures. Yellow-green grass is also a typical feature of many Kashmiri paintings, especially those in the *Birbal Kāchrū* manuscript.

Then there are some conventions: Lord Shiva, whose skin is blue in most of India, is white-skinned (yes, I mean white, and not 'fair' or 'pink') in



Kashmîrî miniatures. (Some sects in Karnataka, too, depict Lord Shiva as white-skinned. Supports my theory that some people from Karnataka and coastal Mahârâshtra are of Kashmîrî origin.)

The Dal Lake in the 'Shankar Âchârya' painting (no. 26, Cultural Academy) is absolutely green, rather than blue. (Who knows, perhaps the weed problem was even worse then than it is now. But water-bodies such as lakes are painted a deep green in most Kashmîrî miniatures.)

4) *Clothes and ornaments*: Just as there is a Shankarachârya hill (and temple of the same name) in no other part of the world, shikârâs (rowboats with canopy), pherans (gowns) and dajehroos (ear ornaments), too, are unique to Kashmîr.

Therefore, if for no other reason, the world will have to accept that these paintings are distinctly Kashmîrî because of the depiction of that hill and those artefacts in several Kashmîrî paintings created over the centuries.

The *nath* (nose ring) and *orhni* (cotton stole) worn by many women in these miniatures, too, are typically Kashmîrî. The headgear of the menfolk in many Hindu religious paintings is normally of the kind that Kashmîrî Pandits would wear. The orhnis normally have typically Kashmîrî (Muslim) patterns on them.

In 'no. 65/ Durga,' on the left is a Pandit woman in a calf-length pheran, belt and kasava. On the right is a bearded Pandit, also in a calf-length pheran and Mughal-style turban. Both pherans have, near the bottom, a fold (laad), which is normally sewn in to cater for later shrinkage.

In '62/ Krishna with gopies' the gopies wear saris the way Pandit women started doing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In '26/ Shankar Âchârya' the Kashmîrî Pandit men are shown wearing turbans typically worn by the community.

That said, it must be pointed out that in a very large number of Kashmîrî paintings, perhaps in the majority, the clothes worn are not Kashmîrî. The reason is obvious: the themes are Persian, or concern the Hinduism or Islâm of the Indian plains, so it would not be correct for the artist to give them Kashmîrî clothes.

5) *Human artefacts*: Some typically Kashmîrî artefacts shown in Kashmîrî miniatures include:

i) *Boats*: Dugouts and Shikârâs. The shikârâ is to be found nowhere but in Kashmîr.

ii) The carpet designs shown in many paintings are distinctly Kashmîrî.

iii) Among the Shaivite images in some pictures are the wooden spoon (used in Shiv temples to dispense holy water with) and a rectangular object of the same colour, perhaps a book. (I assume that it is a book because in



one picture a similarly shaped and coloured object in the hands of a deity is a book.)

6) *Vegetation and flowers:*

i) The Kashmiri lotus occurs frequently in the hands of Lord Vishn  , or as the throne of a deity, or just as a flower. The tradition in Kashmiri paintings is for the outer edges of each petal to be a deep pink and the inner blade of the petals to be white or a pink so pale that it is almost white.

ii) *Trees:* Pines and chin  rs occur off and on. So do cherry blossoms. The baid (willow?) is shown in '26/ Shankar   ch  rya.' At the bottom of this painting, in the centre, is a row of chin  r trees.

iii) Yellow-green grass is a standard feature of a very large number of Kashmiri miniatures.

Equally, quite often the vegetation shown has nothing to do with Kashmir, or even with reality. It is so even in Basohli and other Indian qalams, where the trees shown are normally products of the artist's imagination.

7) *Facial features:* Basohli paintings show people with the huge, beautiful, fish-like eyes of Braj, Avadhi and even Urdu poetry. 'Perhaps the people of Basohli have eyes and features like those,' a Delhi-based art critic (who has never been to Basohli) once argued. Having spent two and a quarter years in Basohli I know better.

Eastern miniature painting, from Egypt to China and Japan, via India and Persia, is often not too concerned about realism in the depiction of facial features. (Equally, of course, there are many Mughal-and Kashmiri-paintings where the faces have been drawn quite realistically. Central Asian-as well as Japanese-miniatures might have faces drawn without too many details, but you can always tell that the people shown are of the Mongoloid race, and not 'Aryans'.)

Therefore, not too much should be made of facial features in a painting as a means of identifying the place where it had been painted.

Besides, I do not believe that all the people of Kashmir belong to the same sub-racial group. There has been a fair amount of migration from the Middle East and West Asia. Besides, within the Caucasoid race at least two groups are represented substantially in Kashmir: the light-skinned Indo-Aryan as well as the darker Mediterranean.

Those notes of caution having been sounded, we can say that almost all the Kashmiri paintings studied show people who have features traditionally associated with Kashmir: high noses and foreheads, and 'Aryan' eyes.

7b) *Hair:* From one particular painting we can tell that the person who has been shown meditating is obviously a Hindu and a Shaivite. Hindu saints (and many traditional Japanese men) normally knot their hair into a bun on



top of the head. In this painting there is a small human figure, the size of a saint's top-knot, where the bun would have been. On his stomach is the blue figure of Lord Krishn.

8) *Animals*: Horses in Kashmîrî paintings are invariably Kashmîrî, even if the theme depicted is Persian. Deer and antlers have been shown in some paintings. In one painting Lord Narsimha looks like a cross between the Kashmîrî snow leopard and the Kashmîrî brown bear. In '65/ Durga on Tiger,' too, the tiger looks more like its Kashmîrî counterpart.

9) The topography, too, is almost always Kashmîrî. Mountains, big or small, always tend to creep into the landscape. Therefore, as the received wisdom goes, these paintings are definitely Kashmîrî.

I wouldn't like to make too much of this tendency, because after all there are hills and mountains in Persian paintings, too. Besides, the mountains shown in many of the paintings that I have studied are hardly realistic. They often look more like lumps of barren rock heaped one atop the other. '26/ Shankar Âchârya' certainly looks like that. Today that hill is so full of trees. Other hills shown seem to be 'karewa' plateaux, which are unique to Kashmîr.

10) *Architecture*: In the Academy's painting no. 62 'Krishna dancing with Gopies' there are two houses in the background, both with slanting roofs. This indicates that the houses belong to the 'snow zone' and not to Sîr Krishn's native plains.

In '23/ Nayika at her toilet alongwith (sic) attends (sic)' there are wooden steps leading to a lower level. There is a low, pink, wooden wall below. This use of wood, too, is Kashmîrî.

In the *Târîkh é Birbal Kâchrû* manuscript some fine Kashmîrî tents and palaces have been shown. They normally jut into one corner of the painting, as is the Indian (Mughal as well as Rajpûr) tradition.

Typically Kashmîrî architecture occurs in a few Kashmîrî paintings. These examples, though few, indicate that even in this regard Kashmîrî paintings were sometimes rooted in the local reality.

Most of the time, the architecture shown in Kashmîrî paintings was the same as in Basohli, Kângrâ and Mughal paintings. A terrace with a low wall (parapet) runs from left to right. In a corner of the painting we see the edges of a balcony, with a portion of its sloping roof.

11) *Dances*: In '59/ Krishna dancing with Gopies' we see the 'hikka' dance: in which two partners, each holding both hands of the other, together twirl around an axis,

12) *The contents of the manuscript*: All the numbered examples given above are of stand-alone paintings. However, the majority of Kashmîrî paintings are manuscript illustrations. If the manuscript contains Kashmîrî folktales (e.g. *Kathâ Sarit Sâgar/Anwaar o Suheyli*) then the paintings that illustrate it are likely to be Kashmîrî.



12b) *The contents of the paintings*: Some paintings tell a story (as the ones in the *T  rikh    Birbal K  chr  * do). The story that they tell is so obviously rooted in the culture (in this case, history) of Kashmir that there can be little doubt about the painting's provenance.

### The Themes

Kashm  r   miniatures were used to illustrate the following kinds of books:

1) Scientific literature:

- i) Botany
- ii) Zoology
- iii) Anatomy: The human body (organs as well as bones) is the subject of many sketches and paintings. Works copied from Emperor Budshah's 15th century medical books reflect the local or Unani (Greek) tradition. Those of the 19th century reveal a very European realism.
- iv) Freaks of nature and the wonders of the world.
- v) The manufacture of guns.

2) Famous works of Persian literature.

3) Persian histories.

4) Kashmir's own folk tales.

5) Kashmir's own histories.

6) Romantic scenes: One bathing scene, which shows a woman in the nude, and one painting of a couple making love, their upper bodies clothed but lower parts naked, are among the paintings that I discovered.

7) Scenes depicting the history of the Sikh period.

8) Hunting scenes: These are the staple of Central Asian miniatures but, mercifully, there few such paintings in Kashmir.

Then there were themes that were found in stand-alone miniatures as well as in manuscript illustrations:

9) The Auliya (Muslim saints) of Kashmir, as well as non-Kashm  r   auliya.

10) Hindu religious themes.

11) 'Charts' (with animals in the borders).

12) Secular Persian themes, e.g. Omar Khayyam.

13) Kashmir   Pandit saints.

14) Life in rural Kashmir: These include pictures of a ceremony at Lall-tr  g-the spring of Lal Ded; and a depiction of the sati ceremony-yes, there were cases of sati even in Kashmir.

15) Scenes from the Mughal court.



**Ancient Kashmîrî Sculpture**

In 2001, the Taliban government of Afghânistân destroyed gigantic sculptures of the Buddha. These had been carved into the mountainside at Bamiyan. At the time several people claimed that the sculptures were the creations of Kashmîrî sculptors. Now, these sculptures belonged to the Gândhâr School, which had extended into Kashmîr as well.

Kashmîr and its neighbouring areas have influenced each other's cultural traditions. Sculpture is one of them. Thus, while it is not certain that Kashmîrîs had sculpted the Bamiyan Buddhas, the point is well taken: from Kashmîr to Kabul it is one continuum as far as ancient sculpture is concerned.

Later that year I took a large media team to various parts of Kargil (Ladâkh), notably Kartse Khar. The idea was to show them similar sculptures, also carved into the mountainside. The local people and some scholars have always known about these sculptures (especially the one at Mulbek, on the Leh-Kargil highway). However, this was the first time that the Kartse Khar Buddha was brought to public notice. This was also the first time that someone had grouped five such Buddhas, located in different parts of Ladâkh, into one school: the Gândhâr. (The other three sculptures are in Sani/ Kargil-Zânskâr, Apati/ Leh and Durbuk/ Leh.)

Twelve to fourteen centuries later it is impossible to say if Kashmîrî sculptors had gone over to Afghânistân to do the Bamiyan statues, or sculptors from Gândhâr had come over to sculpt the ones in Leh and Kargil. It is sufficient that they all belong to the same school. However, it is generally believed that Kashmîrî artists did these sculptures, as well as the paintings at Alchi (also in Leh).

Within Kashmîr Valley, apart from the SPS Museum, the best place to find such sculptures are temples like the ones at Mârtañd and Awantipora.

*Brahmâ images:* In Kashmîr, J.L. Bhan writes, Lord Brahmâ is depicted 'either in association with Siva [Lord Shiv] or Vishnû or he is depicted in the Shesheaski theme.' After the sixth century A.D. the worship of Lord Brahmâ seems to have become more popular than before. Several images of Lord Brahmâ, all by himself, have been found dating to after then.

Bhan has discovered images of Lord Brahmâ at Dhumatbal, Verinag, Nadihal, Awantiporâ and Devsar.

*The Buddha in Kashmîrî art:* Buddhist images sculpted in Kashmîr after the 8th century A.D. have a unique feature. A flower emerges from behind the shoulder of the deity. Later it merges with the crown. This motif has possibly been inspired by the flowers that grow behind each of Lord Brahmâ's ears in sculpture-to show where one of his four heads ends and the next one begins.



## Kashmîrî Music

Traditional Kashmîrî music, like music almost everywhere, is either classical or folk. Kashmîrî classical music is called Sufiana, or the music of the Sufi saints. Folk forms include Chhakri, Roḡf/Rauf, and Wanawon<sup>1</sup>.

King Yusuf Shah Chak (16<sup>th</sup> century) is said to be the father of Kashmîrî classical music. He patterned the Kashmîrî system directly on its Persian counterpart, rather than on the Hindustani system of Central India (which, too, has some Persian influences). Following an internal coup he fled to Emperor Akbar's court in Agra. There, according to Kashmîrî sources<sup>1</sup>, he met an Italian (yes, Italian) called Tona Santa, better known in India as *Tansen*, and on at least two occasions corrected the latter's technique. He authored the *Râst Kashmîrî*, a group of notes which correspond to Persia's *Râst Farsi*. Kashmîrî music has since taken on several Hindustani influences, too.

Just as Hindustani classical music has *râgs*, Kashmîrî music has *muqâms* (modes).

### Kashmîrî muqâms based on Hindustani râgs include:

Lalit	Multani
Bageshwari	Jaijaiwanti
Bahar	Koshi (Paharhi)
Basant Bihag	Bhairavi
Kalyan	

### Kashmîrî muqâms taken from Persian râsts include:

Araq	Hussaini
Navroz e Subah	Rehavi
Isphahân	Râst Farsi
Dugah	Panjgah
Sehgah	

<sup>1</sup> *Bahâristân-é-Shâhî*, a 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century history by an anonymous Kashmîrî noble



Yusuf was hardly the only, or even the first, Kashmirî king to be expert at music. Zain-ul-Abedin was an accomplished classical singer. Sultan Hassan Shah (1472-84) invited Carnatic musicians to Kashmir. They left behind their influence on Kashmirî music.

Hindustani percussion instruments are struck according to *tâls*. So are Kashmirî drums. However, the *tâls* of the two regions are quite dissimilar.

### Sufiana Mauseeqi (music)

(Pron: soo-fee-â-nâ) This used to be an elitist form of music played by quartets only at royal courts and gatherings of the rich. The lyrics, mostly in Kashmirî, are sometimes in Persian, too. These quartets, one of whose members, the *ustad* (maestro), acts as the leader, play on the *santoor*, the Kashmirî *sitar* (different from its Hindustani cousin), the *sâz* and the *dhukra* (a drum, like the *tabla*). They sing, together and in harmony, verses called the *baeth* which are either romantic or mystic. These songs could as well be about nature as about the saints of Islâm (especially Kashmirî *rishis*), including Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Baeth songs sometimes are ballads about Heemâl and Nâgrâi, legendary Kashmirî lovers, or about Solomon and Sheba.

*Muqâms* are the basis of melody. They are to Kashmirî music what *râgs* are to Hindustani: a group of notes, the order of which, or emphasis on, can not be changed while going up (or coming down) the scale. Classical songs (and instrumental compositions) use one *muqâm* or another as their base. There are 54 *muqâms* in all.

As we have seen, some *muqâms* are based on Hindustani *râgs*, e.g. *Asawari*, *Poorabi* and *Khamaj*. Others, as we saw, were based on Persian *muqâms*. The basic notes, however, are and have always been Hindustani.

Like the *alâp* of Hindustani music, the first movement, called the *shakal*, is slow and introduces the theme. However, unlike the *alap*, the *shakal* is an *instrumental* rendition of the base (or structure) of the *muqâm*. The *shakal* is followed by the *muqâm* itself: where verses and couplets are sung.

The popular *tâls* (beats) are *sehtal* (teen *tâl*), *nîmdur*, *dur-e-khafit* and *Turki zarb*. *Talana* is a rhythm popular in Sufiana. (It is also found in some South Indian dances and could be one of the influences of Carnatic music.)

Unlike Hindustani music, Sufiana is always sung in chorus. Secondly, musicians who are *both* vocalists and instrumentalists perform it. In the past, singing would be accompanied by Hafiz Naghma, a dance in which the meaning of the song is expressed by physical movements. A female dancer, called the Hafeeza, would sing and dance with Sufiana.

**Instruments:** In Sufiana music, the *sâz* is the only instrument played with a bow. All the other stringed instruments are struck with a plectrum, the *miz-rabor*, and a pair of wooden sticks, the *qalams*.



The santoor (lit.: one hundred strings) actually has only 96 strings, stretched over a hollow wooden frame made of the wood of the mulberry tree. It is the principal instrument in Kashmîrî music, its strings being struck with two elegantly carved, curved sticks, made of wood or, increasingly, plastic. It came to Kashmîr during Budshah's era and has been thoroughly indigenised. (Its Persian counterpart is quite different. In most respects the Kashmîrî santoor is closer to the hundred-stringed, ancient Indian *shadtantra veena*.)

### Folk Music

Folk music is of many kinds, depending on the occasion:

**Wanawun (marriage songs):** The songs sung at Muslim weddings are quite different from those sung at Hindu weddings.

Muslim wedding songs generally cover the first few years of married life: beginning with the nuptials and the bride's departure from her parents' home, to the circumcision (*khatna*) of the couple's son and the son's *haqeeq mundan* (ceremonial shaving of the head). The wanawun baeths of Abdul Ahad Nadim of Bandiporâ are particularly popular.

The songs sung at Hindu weddings, on the other hand, are Vedic chants, steeped in classical Hinduism.

As at weddings elsewhere in India, percussion instruments are employed to provide the beat (*tâl*). These are the *tumbakhnari* and the *noet*. The *tumbakhnari* is derived from the Persian tumbak. It is a hollow clay pot with animal skin tautly stretched over its open end at the top. The difference between this and western drums is that the *tumbakhnari* is struck with the tips of fingers. The *noet*, too, is a clay pot but with an open mouth. This open end and the sides are struck while playing.

**Roef:** Like the wanawun, the roef has traditionally been sung only by women. (Only since the late 1940s, with the return of political power to the Kashmîris after almost 360 years, have experiments taken place, most of them in the portals of the government-run Radio Kashmîr and, later, television. The roef is now also sung by men—but in conjunction with the *chhakri*.) This form—a group dance accompanied by a song—is performed at festivals like Eid, but also at weddings.

**Chhakri:** This is rural music performed by at least four musicians at a time. It was brought to the towns by the *rababis* (rabab players) of Kreer, Kawdara and Akingam. Qaiser Qalander notes, 'During the Afghân period a male dancer, Bacha, became associated with it, adding [Kathak] to Chhakri.' Generally, four instruments are played along with the singing: the *sarang* and the Persian *rabab* (both stringed instruments, for the melody) and the *tumbakhnari* and the *noet* (for the beat). The *noet* is also called the *ghara*. In the 1950s the harmonium was added.



Chhakri, the music most favoured by the peasants, owes its origins to Lal (pron. like the English 'lull') Vâkh, the poetry of Lal Ded. Since then it has been augmented by the religious poetry of a host of luminaries including Rasool Mîr and Mehmood Gâmi.

*Laddi Shah* is a kind of folk-music that is very popular in the rural areas, partly because of the satire, sarcasm and humour contained in its lyrics.

The *bachcha naghma* is one of the few forms of singing and dancing performed by just one person. (The others are all group forms and choruses.) However, even here the audience can join the soloist.

## **Folk Dances of Kashmîr**

There are no mixed, coed, folk dances in Kashmîr. Many Kashmîrî dances are performed along with song. Therefore, they have already been mentioned in the section on 'Music' in this chapter.

**Hafiza dances:** This was one dance that was liked by the rich and the poor alike. The rich would finance such dances on their own; the poor would take out subscriptions. Women alone performed this dance. The clothes that they wore were similar to those worn in Kathak: tight bodices and cummerbunds. The Sikhs' governors of Kashmîr (early 19<sup>th</sup> century) were great patrons, as were the early Dogras (mid-19<sup>th</sup> century). The Sikhs' governors even maintained Hafiza troupes in their courts to perform for their guests, and for themselves. For various reasons the later Dogras started shying away from maintaining such troupes. Deprived of royal patronage this art withered away.

**Wattal Dambal:** The Wattals are one of the most deprived communities of Kashmîr: they are 'scavengers' (charpersons; sweepers) and shoemakers. Other subaltern classes also join them in this dance. This is a vigorous, joyous group dance of thirty to forty men who move to the beat of a *dool* (drum). The men sit in a circle and chant hymns and prayers in their own dialect. As the beat quickens the movements get more athletic and the dancers jump about skillfully and entertainingly.

**Patthar:** (pron.: per-therr) Traditional folk theatre is called *patther*. It literally means 'to act', 'to imitate' or 'to pretend'. It is performed by the *Bhânds*. This form of theatre is satirical. It occupies a position similar to that of the art of the court jester: Through it the players were able to criticise the rulers without giving obvious offence.

The *Bhands* are a community, a 'tribe', of folk artistes, not only in Kashmîr but all over North India and Pakistan. They hold a subaltern position in the social hierarchy.

## **References**

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## The Festivals of Kashmîr

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### Festivals unique to Kashmîr

The four seasons are called *sonth* (spring), *har* (summer), *harduh* (autumn) and *wandh* (winter). The seventy-day winter is divided into three parts, *chill-e-kalân* (the first forty days), *chill-e-khurd* (the next twenty days) and *chill-e-bachh* (the last ten days).

The end of winter is formally celebrated by Tel Ashthami. In the evening of that day, children take old, discarded baskets, especially those that were used to cover kangris (see 'Handicrafts') to the steps by the banks of River Jehlum and set them on fire.

*Sonth* is the season welcomed the most. Almonds break into a blossom in March and the Kashmîris make a beeline for almond orchards (Badamwaris), especially the one near Hari Parbat in Srinagar. M. Amin Pandit says that this is 'a month-long fair'. I hope to revive this tradition someday.

The Baisakhi Mela of the Mughal Garden at Nishat (Srinagar) comes next. (Baisakhi is on April 13 or 14.) This is an institution that I revived in 2002. I extended the celebrations to other venues in Srinagar and the rest of Kashmîr, as well.

The Kashmîri New Year is called *Nau Reh* (or Nau Verih) and usually occurs in March or April. The Hindus seek the blessings of God for a prosperous year for their family. They do so by getting one of the young girls of the family to decorate a large metal dish with rice, sugar, fruit and dry fruits and a sheet of paper about the new year. The girl takes this plate to each member of the family. On this day, both Hindus and Muslims go to the Hari Parbat of Srinagar with samovars to make tea and sit in the spring sun.

One of the finest spring festivals is the Yâsmîn (jasmine) festival held at the shrine of Hyder Sâheb, in a jasmine grove in Hyderpora (near the airport).



## Aish Muqâm's 'Zool' festival (Ânañtnâg, April)

Such festivals are a good time to hear the *chhakri* sung in its original habitat (vs. on television). Rural people from the three valleys around the hilltop shrine—*Doru-Shahbad*, *Lidder* and *Trâl*—come to pay homage, beginning their journey in the early morning. Torches are lit in each of the three valleys when the festival begins. *Bhânds*, who are traditional folk singers, mimics, satirists and actors, arrive with their instruments, the *sarang* and *noot*. So do magicians. In the evening drums begin to beat and people start chanting religious hymns as they dance around the shrine. A torchlight procession begins, signifying the victory of good over evil. The next day farmers go from the shrine to their fields to begin the process of ploughing the earth and sowing. (See also the chapter on 'Ânañtnâg'.)

The other end of the agricultural season is when the crop has been harvested. Now autumn festivals are held, the best known being those at *Bijbehara*, *Ânañtnâg* proper and *Achâbal* (all three in the chapter on 'Ânañtnâg'), when the peasants get a respite from work on the fields. At *Bijbehara* festivities last three days. Apparently at all three places there are 'mock' wedding processions, complete with a faux bridegroom who is dressed and rides a horse like one. Drum beaters and *shehnaï* players lead the people of that and nearby villages in a joyous procession, everyone infected with the hilarity of it all.

Other harvest festivals are at *Akingam*, *Bring* and *Kulgam* (all in the chapter on 'Ânañtnâg') and at *Budgâm* town ('*Budgâm*'). In *Ganderbal*, a suburb of *Srinagar*, this coincides with the *urs* of *Qamar Sâheb*, where most devotees come by bus, but some still do it the traditional way, by slow moving boats. They 'indulge in fun and frolic' and 'take time off for a week-long vacation and stay in boats near the (*Chinâr*) groves of *Beehama* near *Ganderbal*,' says Mr. Pandit.

To get back to summer, the *Jeshth* and *Har Ashthamis* are important to the Hindus (see '*Kheer Bhawâni*' in the chapter on 'The Kashmîri Pandits...').

On the occasion of *Raksha Bandhan* (August), the Pandits of *Srinagar* climb the hill now known as the *Shankaracharya* hill. Some Pandits, and over a hundred thousand Hindus from all over, try to spend a few days during the preceding month at the holy cave of *Sri Amar Nath ji* (see '*Amar Nath Yatra*').

On the fourteenth day of *Sawan* (July/August) a fair (*mela*) is held at a Hindu temple atop a hillock in *Khrew*, 22 km. from *Srinagar*.

*Har* (pron.: *herr*) means 'bird' in Kashmîri—in particular, *Shârikâ*, the bird-goddess. The 'herr' of the *Hari Parbat* is named after *Shârikâ ji*. (See '*The History of Kashmîr*') The ninth day of the Kashmîri month of *Har* (June/July) is celebrated as *Har Navmi*, when the Pandits go to the temple



of *Shārikā Mata* on the Hari Parbat in tens of thousands. (I am not using the past tense for any of the Pandit festivals, despite the migration of most of them to the plains outside Kashmir. This is partly because even at the turn of the millennium these festivals are being celebrated, though on a lower key: the Kheer Bhawānī fair and Amar Nath Yatra are, in fact, more crowded than ever before. And partly because I fondly hope things will be as before again.)

### **Festivals popular in Kashmir**

Without doubt the two Eids (the dates of which change every year) are the most popular festivals in Kashmir. Since sweets ('sweetmeats') are not really part of the Kashmiri tradition, it's the bakers' shops that everyone throngs to pick up cakes and pastries for friends. Some quintessentially Kashmiri traditions have evolved on this front. One is the cake baked to look like a log with a little fork. It's a hot favourite at Eid. Maybe because this is the kind of log they all wish they had in their fireplaces but, because of modern gadgets, no longer do. The other is the 'White Forest cake', the Kashmiri confectioner's answer to the 'Black Forest cake'.)

Ramzan is the month of fasting and prayer. In many Muslim-majority areas the whole town comes alive at night during this month: shopping, socialising, and, for the children, putting on new clothes and attending religious sessions even at night. Not so in Kashmir. Perhaps the cold did not allow such a tradition to develop. But even here some modern traditions have grown.

I used to be a neighbour of the Khanyaris, among the richest families in Kashmir. They would give away raw meat to the poor every morning during this holy month. So, enormous queues would form, and well before the hour appointed by the Khanyaris. Because it would take almost an hour (if not longer) to serve the last person in the queue, that's how long the crowd would stay there. A whole cottage industry of hawkers would materialise to service the other needs of the people in this queue. That always struck me as ironic, because they were supposed to be poor, seeking alms, not consumers buying the wares of these hawkers.

During the holy month some families get the Quran Sharief recited all day. Others go to the neighbourhood after the pre-dawn breakfast to listen to the holy word.

The *Shiva Ratri* (February; on the 14<sup>th</sup> Phalgun) might be an all-India festival but most Kashmiri Pandits genuinely believe that it is uniquely theirs. And in some ways it is. No other part of India gives this auspicious day the importance that Kashmir does. (See also the chapter 'The Kashmiri Pandits...')



## Festivals celebrated all over Kashmîr

### Ashoora

*Ashoora* (lit.: 'the tenth') is the tenth day of the Islâmic month of Muharram. This is when Imam Hussain was killed at Karbala (Iraq). The Imam was the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him. He died fighting the army of Yazeed, who wanted to be the caliph of Arabia. The two main Shia organisations of Srinagar City take turns to lead a large procession of mourners to commemorate the Imam's martyrdom. This procession goes through much of the city and ends at the Imâmbârâs (Shiite places of worship) of Hassanabad and Jadibal (misspelt Zadibal). The procession consists of several thousand Shia men. They recite elegies, beat their breasts and, if young, flagellate themselves till they bleed. The wounds heal miraculously fast, leaving no scars. A fine horse is included in every such procession. It represents Zuljinah, the horse Imam Hussain rode on the battlefield of Karbala. There are processions in Budgâm, Pattan, Gorn Ahmed Pora and other places as well.

### Baisakhi (Kashmîr)

This major Hindu-Sikh festival falls on the first day Baisakh (normally, the 13<sup>th</sup> April). It is a spring festival that celebrates the new Bikrami year. The Hindus of Kashmîr would gather at Ishber (about a kilometre above the Nishat gardens). They would then bathe in the holy Guptganga spring and perform some prayers. After that tens of thousands of Kashmiri Hindus (and countless Muslims) would go to the Nishat gardens, where scores of temporary stalls would be set up. The better off Kashmiri Pandits would hire a *doonga* (large boat) on the day before the festival, where they would lay out a feast for their extended family and friends.

### First Navaratra (Chaitra) (Srinagar and other parts of Kashmîr)

This is the New Year's Day of the Kashmiri Pandits. It is the first day of the *Laukik* or Sapt Rishi calendar. It falls on the first day of the bright half of the luni-solar month of Chaitra. Because the month is partly lunar, this event does not occur on the same Gregorian date every year. But because it is partly solar, the *Laukik* date varies by only a few days each time.

The Kashmiri Pandits would visit their second most important temple, that of Sharika Devi, on this occasion. Almost all the Pandits of Srinagar would be there at some stage during the day. Those who lived in distant villages and towns would go to the nearest important temple.

This is a spring festival. Almond flowers are all a-blossom at that time of the year. The finest almond orchards of Srinagar are located on the Hari Parbat hill near the temple of Sharika ji. After paying homage to the bird-



goddess, the Pandits would go over to the almond groves to picnic with their families. The whole hill would come alive with colour and merrymaking: and these are not my own words. All Kashmiris recall this with nostalgia.

At the bottom of the hill where the temple is, there is a flat, open area called the Devi Ângan (lit. 'the courtyard of the goddess'). Hundreds of shops would spring up on the day of the fair.



# **People**



People



## The People of Kashmîr

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### **Hari Singh's Jammû and Kashmîr: Population and area**

Mahârâjâ Hari Singh's Jammû & Kashmîr was the largest princely State in India, ahead even of the Nizam's Hyderabad. It was two-thirds the size of the massive Bombay Presidency of British India. It was divided into the Kashmîr and Jammû provinces each headed by a Governor (now known as Divisional Commissioner). Ladâkh district was under a Wazir-e-Wazarat (now Deputy Commissioner, Collector and District Magistrate).

In 1941, the population of the State was 40,21,616 (i.e. 4.02 million). 77.11% of the people were Muslim, 20.12% were Hindu, 1.64% Sikh and 1.01% Buddhist.<sup>1</sup>

Kashmîr was divided into four districts and Jammû into five, each under a Wazir-e-Wazarat. The districts, along with their tehsils (in brackets) and, in the case of Bârâmullâ and Reasi, niabats, were:

**Kashmîr province:** *Ânañtnâg* (Ânañtnâg, Kulgam, Awantiporâ and Srinagar); *Bârâmullâ* (Bârâmullâ, Srî Pratap Singh Pura and Uttar Machhi Pura. Niabats: Guréz and Sopore); *Muzaffarâbâd* (Muzaffarâbâd, Urî and Kamah) and *Astore* (Bunji was under a revenue assistant, not a tehsildar).

Not including Ladâkh, Kashmîr had an area of 8,539 square miles (approx. 22,200 square kilometres). In 1941, its population was 17,28,686 (i.e. 1.7 million).

**Jammû province:** *Jammû* (Jammû, Samba and Akhnoor); *Mirpur* (Mirpur, Naushera, Bhimbar and Kotli); *Udhampur* (Udhampur, Ramban, Ramnagar, Bhaderwâh and Kishtwâr); *Reasi* (Reasi and Râjouri. Niabat: Gulabgarh) and *Kathuâ* (Kathuâ, Jasmergarh and Basohli).



Jammû had an area of 12,401 sq. miles (approx. 32,200 sq.km.). In 1941, according to Daya Sagar, its population was 20,01,557 (i.e. 2 million). Journalist-historian H.P. Sharma has a slightly different figure for the population of Jammû province. He puts it at 19,81,433. Either way, the Muslims, with a population of 12,15,676 in 1941, were in an overwhelming, 66%, majority in Jammû province as well.

**Ladâkh district:** (Tehsils: Ladâkh, Kargil and Skardu.)

The area of Ladâkh, including Kargil, Skardu and the Gilgit division was 63,554 sq. miles (approx. 1,65,000 sq.km.). Its population in 1941 was 3,11,915 (or 0.3 million).

Bunji tehsil was in the Gilgit division till 1935-36. That year the lease of the trans-Indus 'ilaqa' (region or tract) was transferred to the (British) Government of India. In turn, the cis-Indus area was added to Ladâkh district. Bunji was later detached from Ladâkh district and put directly under Kashmir province.

### **Jammû and Kashmir after 1947: Population and area**

*Population and territory:* Jammû and Kashmir: Total Area: 2,22,236.0 sq.km (including Pākistān Occupied Kashmir/ POK and China Occupied Kashmir/ COK). Of this 45.62% is actually with India. 78,114 sq. km. (35.15%) are under POK; Pak gifted 5,180 sq. km. (2.33%) to China. COK is 37,555 sq. km. (16.9%).

Population of the state, as in 2001, not including the occupied areas: 98,86,585. Decadal growth of population in the State: 1980s: 32.56%; 1990s: 24.56%. Population density: 98 per sq. km. Literacy: 53.57% (males: 64.60; females: 41.61).

*Census:* The last two censuses in the State were conducted in 1981 and 2001. The census scheduled for 1991 could not be held. So, the State government made some projections about what the population of the fourteen districts of the State must have been in 1991. These projections have been mentioned in the chapters about districts.

In 1981, the population of the Valley of Kashmir was 31,34,804 (3.1 million), or 52.35% of the population of the State. Jammû province had a population of 27,18,213 (2.7 million) or 45.39% of the total. Ladâkh, which is part of Kashmir province but not of Kashmir Valley, accounted for the remaining 2.2%. The population of the entire state was 59,87,389 (5.9 million).

In 2001, the population of the State was 98,86,585 (9.8 million). That of Kashmir Valley was 53,15,096 (5.3 million) and of Jammû province was 42,90,871 (4.2 million). There were 2,22,598 (0.2 million) people in Ladâkh (Leh and Kargil).



Districts as in 2004: In 1947, the State lost the following districts to Pākistān: *Kashmîr*: Muzaffarābād (partly), and Astore. It also lost the Bunji tehsil. The Urî and Karnah tehsils remained with India. *Jammû*: Mirpur (partly). The erstwhile *Ladâkh district*: The Skardu tehsil and the Gilgit division.

Since July 1979, there have been the following fourteen districts in the State: *Kashmîr province* (which includes the *Ladâkh region*): Ānañtnâg, Bârāmullâ, Budgām, Kupwârâ, Pulwāmâ and Srinagar. Kargil and Leh make up *Ladâkh*. *Jammû province*: Dodâ, Jammû, Kathuâ, Poonch, Râjourî and Udhampur.

#### Kashmîr Valley: The Major Linguistic Groups as in 1981

Language	Number of persons who speak it
Kashmîrî	28,06,441
Dogri	2,943
Gojari	2,55,310
Ladâkhi	471
Punjâbi/Pahârhi	41,181
Lahanda (Pothwari)	21
Urdu	3,830
Balti	811
Shina (Dardi)	12,159 (Mainly in Guréz)
Tibetan	796 (A small refugee population in Srinagar)

**Population and Literacy:** It might seem from the following table that between 1981 and 2001, despite more than twelve years of militancy, Kashmîr did very well on the literacy front. But is this true? The answer is both 'yes' and 'no.' In absolute terms the spread of literacy was, indeed, very good. In all districts, except Srinagar, the proportion of literate people more than doubled. However, when compared with Jammû province, *Ladâkh* (Leh and, notably, Kargil) or the rest of India, the relative performance was not at all satisfactory.



	Popn 2001	Lit % 2001	Male %	Fem %	Lit % 1981	Growth %	Gender
Jammu & Kashmir	98,86,585	53.57	64.6	41.61	32.68	3.41	900
Kupwara	6,35,354	40.27	52.76	26.83	18.82		
Baramulla	11,54,591	43.9	55.4	31.39	20.62		
Srinagar	12,11,379	58.38	67.72	48.05	33.31		
Budgam	5,24,633	38.47	49.63	26.53	17.86		
Pulwama	6,27,284	46.87	58.14	34.93	22		
Anantnag	11,61,855	43.65	54.86	31.51	23.1		
Kashmir Valley	53,15,096	47.88	59.29	35.15		3.68	907

(Popn.= Population. Lit '01= The percentage of the total population that was literate in the year 2001. Male= the percentage of men who were literate in 2001. Fem.= the percentage of women who were literate in 2001. Lit '81= The percentage of the total population that was literate in the year 1981. Growth= the average annual per cent rate of growth of the population between 1981 and 2001. Gender= the number of women for every 1,000 men.)

*Religion:* The majority of the people of the State are Muslim (64.19%), followed by the Hindus (32.24%) and the Sikhs (3.47%). The 69,706 Buddhists of the State made up just over one percent of the population in 1981. The Buddhists are concentrated mainly in Leh and Kargil districts, and in a few villages (1981 population: 1,113) in the areas of Dodâ district (of the Kishtwâr sub-division, to be precise) that border Ladâkh.

Within the Valley, the 1981 census recorded that 94.96% of the people were Muslims and 3.95% were Hindus. The Sikhs, who live in certain parts of Bâramullâ, Pulwâmâ and Srinagar districts, constituted just over one percent of the Valley. There were around 500 Christians.

In Jammû province, the Hindus were in the majority (66.32%), followed by the Muslims (29.6%) and the Sikhs (3.3%). There were around eight thousand Christians in 1981.

A similar religion-wise analysis based on the 2001 census had not been done till mid-2003. However, based on an analysis of the 1981 census and the totals of the 2001 census, some mathematical projections have been made about what the religion-wise break-up would have been in Kashmir province (including Ladâkh) in 2001 (had the mass-migration of the Hindus not taken place):



District	Buddhists	Christian	Hindûs	Jains	Muslims	Sikhs
Kupwârâ		32	11,300		5,45,069	2,462
Bârâmulâ	3	180	22,972	14	10,99,40	16,670
Srinagar	299	356	1,01,063	92	10,91,58	10,768
Budgâm	19	163	16,391		599,004	8,769
Pulwâmâ			17,163		658,604	11,166
Anantnâg		61	32,043		10,67,12	6,567
Leh	94,374	265	3,478		17,708	313
Kargil	21,865	138	2,536		87,392	255
55,46,609	1,16,239	464	2,06,946	106	51,65,88	56,970

## The Muslims

Not all Kashmîri Muslims are descendants of local Hindus who had converted to Islâm, though most of them certainly are. The Syeds, for example, trace their lineage to Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, through his daughter Hazrat Fatima and his son-in-law Hazrat Ali. They are thus of Arab origin. The Syeds migrated to Kashmîr in substantial numbers. In 1372 and 1393 respectively, seven hundred and three hundred Syeds fled from Iran to Kashmîr. This was in addition to Syeds who migrated as individuals before and after. The migration of Turks (not just from Turkey but from other parts of Central Asia, as well) was much bigger in terms of numbers: their descendants are spread all over Kashmîr and Poonch. There are entire villages of Turks in Bârâmulâ. They speak Pahârî, a variant of Punjâbi, at home.

Those whose ancestors had migrated from Baltistan or other Dard areas (mostly in POK) are another major presence. (More on the Dards in the 'History of Kargil' in the volume on 'Ladakh'.) Several Shias have an Iranian connection: either their ancestors had migrated from Iran to Kashmîr or some of their relatives went over from Kashmîr to Iran (sometimes via central India). In Iran, the religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini was known as Khomeini Hindi (Khomeini of India) because of his ancestral links with Kashmîr and central India.

In Gutli Bâgh near Ganderbal (Srinagar district) there is a tiny tribe of Pushtûns who still speak their ancestral language, retain several Pushtûn customs and have a leadership structure of their own. Their eyes are often green, their features distinctive.



### The Muslim diaspora

Ethnic Kashmiris have for centuries lived in Rājouri, Poonch, Kishtwār, parts of Udhampur (notably Reasi), several parts of Dodā district (especially Banihāl) and even Kathuā (in Basohli, Banni and Lohāi Malhār). Zāñskār has several hundred ethnic Kashmiri Muslims who came over from Kishtwār, rather than directly from Kashmir. Many of the Muslims of Chambā (HP) are ethnic Kashmiris. Some of the Argons of Leh had a Kashmiri ancestor.

I have always wondered if the Kashmiri Muslims of many of these regions went over as Muslims; or went there as Hiñdūs and later converted to Islām. In the case of Kishtwār, Rājouri and Poonch one can say with certainty that a Kashmiri diaspora existed in these regions well before the advent of Islām.

The manufacture of shāwls (and famines) took Kashmiri Muslims to several parts of Jammū and the Punjāb, notably Amritsar (from which they have since migrated, perhaps to Pākistān) and Lahore (where they still live in big numbers). By 'ethnic Kashmiri' I mean someone whose ancestors spoke the Kashmiri language at home. Thus the people of Mirpur (POK) don't count: even though internationally they are the most vocal 'Kashmiris.' Nor do the people of the 'Northern Areas' of POK. Mirpuris and the people of NA are from J&K, but are not ethnic Kashmiris.

Trade in shāwls made the Kashmiris go as far as Lucknow and Calcutta (Kolkata). However, I believe that the tiny Kashmiri community of Bihar has to do with the Kashmiri King Yusuf Shah Chak's 16th century exile there, and not shāwls. And the elite Kashmiri Shia diaspora that stretches from Lucknow to parts of present-day Pākistān to Qom in Iran, I suspect, has to do with the mobility (and matrimonial links) that any educated elite has across regions and nation-states.

Bombay, too, has always had a small Kashmiri Muslim community. Nawab Ahsanullah Khān of Dhaka (formerly Dacca) was an eighteenth century noble of Kashmiri origin. Since the early nineteenth century there has been a Kashmiri (Hiñdū as well as Muslim) population in Kābul.

After 1947 (especially after 1990), a substantial Kashmiri Muslim community has come up in Delhi. More than half of them either trade in apples and mutton, or manufacture carpets. However, almost as many of them are professionals.

Before 1947, the Muslims of Lahore would derisively call the Kashmiris 'hatows.' During the preceding century or two, well-to-do Muslims from the Punjāb, Jammū, Uttar Pradesh and some other parts of South Asia had started treating the Kashmiris as social inferiors and would avoid matrimonial alliances with them.<sup>1</sup> This humiliation is one of the main reasons why the Kashmiris, led by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, preferred India over Pākistān in 1947.



When Pākistân-inspired militancy started in 1989, as if on cue the Urdu newspapers of Kashmîr started receiving letters from Pākistân, asking to be forgiven for having used the pejorative expression 'hatow.'

How things have changed since 1947. Today if a person has even a drop of Kashmîrî blood in his veins he proclaims it proudly. From novelist Salman Rushdie to writer M.J. Akbar and actress-fashion model Katrina Kaif, people everywhere are celebrating their Kashmîrî roots.

And in the matrimonial market, middle-class as well as elite Muslims from all over India are quite happy if their daughters get married to Kashmîrî Muslim men from similar backgrounds. (Working class Kashmîrî men married similarly placed Bangladeshi women in large numbers in the last few decades of the 20th century.) Kashmîr's enormous economic prosperity since 1947 is an important reason. Another factor is that other Indian Muslims feel that because the Muslims are in a majority in Kashmîr, they do not have to live in fear of riots and discriminatory treatment by organised groups.

### The Hânjîs

The Hânjîs are a very poor, mostly illiterate, people who live in boats on the lakes and, sometimes, rivers of Kashmîr. Tourism has brought some prosperity to some Hânjîs living in Srinagar, though.

*Origin: Theory i):* The Hânjîs claim to be the descendants of Noah, who is one of the prophets of Islâm. (His Hiñdû incarnation, Manû, has an even higher, if controversial, status among the Hiñdûs. He is the one who codified the Hiñdû law.)

*Theory ii):* Raja Parbat (or Pratap) Sen brought boatmen over from Sangaldip (perhaps Sri Lanka). This theory is the one most widely accepted.

- 1 It wasn't always so. In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries Kashmîrî royalty routinely intermarried with other South Asian royal families of that era: especially those of Delhi and Kabul. King Shahâbuddîn of Kashmîr and Sultân Ahmed Khân of Kabul married each other's sisters. Ahmed's daughter married Shahâbuddîn's brother, Qutbuddîn. Shahâbuddîn's daughter married the son of Feroz Shâh, king of Delhi (and much of India). Feroz Shâh, in turn, gave three of his daughters in marriage to Shahâbuddîn's family. (-From *Târikh-e-Kashmîr* by Syed Ali, sixteenth century A.D.)

I suspect that the snobbishness of the Muslim elites of North India towards Kashmîrî Muslims was limited to the period during which the Valley had lost its political independence.

Part of the reason must have also been that the North Indian Muslim elite was mainly of ethnic Sheikh (Arab), Mughal and Pushtûn stock. They saw locally converted Muslims as an underclass (*the ajlâf*). They would mostly marry people of their own ethnic groups. On the other hand the population of these three elite groups in Kashmîr is extremely minuscule. The Kashmîrî Muslim elite consisted mainly of local converts.



*Theory iii):* The Hânjîs believe that they are of Kshatriya (warrior/ ruler) stock. Lawrence said that they were of the Vaisya (business) caste. However, traditionally they have been at the very bottom of the hierarchy. In anger they often call their fellow Hânjîs by the Kashmirî word for the so called 'untouchable' people.

*Theory iv):* Some Hânjîs claim to be of gypsy stock.

*Sub-divisions:* Based on their profession and lifestyle, Hanjis can be classified into nine sub-groups. These, in the descending order of their internal hierarchy, are (i) Demb-Hanz (those who grow vegetables on the Dal Lake), (ii) Gari-Hanz (those who gather siñghârâs/ water-nuts on the Wular Lake), (iii) Bahatchi-Hanz (those who live in bahatch and war boats), (iv) Dûñgâ-Hanz (those who own dûñgâ passenger boats); this group has its own hierarchy, depending on the location of the Dûñgâ, (v) Gad-Hanz (fishermen) and (vi) Haka-Hanz (those who collect wood from water bodies).

The other three sub-castes, but not in any particular order, are the Shikârâ-Hanz (those who ply shikârâ boats), Mata-Hanz (those who deal in wood) and Houseboat Hanz (a very well-to-do lot).

In which parts of the state do they live? On the Dal Lake (the elite), the Wular (the next in rank), the Âñchâr, the Tsont-i-Kol (between Dal Gate and the old golf course of Srinagar) and on the banks of the Jehlum. Before the Nallah Mâr canal of Srinagar was disastrously turned into a road, choking up a historical outlet for the excess water of Srinagar City, the 'lowest' sub-caste of the Dûñgâ-Hanz used to live there.

Majid Hussain, who estimates that around 12% of the Hânjîs are literate, points out that they also live on the Jehlum: between Khanâbal (near Ânañtnâg town) and Chattâbal (Srinagar city).

### **Gujjars and Bakerwâls**

The Gujjars and Bakerwâls (pron. 'bucker-wâl') make up around 18% of the population of the State. Almost all Bakerwâls and many Gujjars are nomads. The Gujjars (go= cow) tend cattle (mainly buffaloes) and the Bakerwâls (bakrî= goat) herd sheep. A very large section of Gujjars have permanent homes and are not nomads. They are part of an all-India community that is mostly Hiñdû. However, in Jammû and Kashmir and the neighbouring areas of Pâkistân and occupied Kashmir (and, to an extent, in Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal and north Punjâb) all Gujjars and Bakerwâls are Muslims.

*Origin: Theory i):* Some Gujjars believe that their ancestors came from Georgia (which, they believe, was once called Gurjia or Gurjaristân), a Central Asian republic formerly in the Soviet Union. These cowherds are supposed to have migrated from Georgia to India through Iraq, Iran, Afghânistân and Baluchistan, before settling in Gujrât (a district in Pâkistân's Punjâb province).



*Theory ii):* Cunningham, a British Raj scholar, wrote that the Gujjars' ancestors were the Kushan and Yachi tribes of the Eastern Tartar community (also of the erstwhile Soviet Union). The Tartars are a Turkic people.

*Theory iii):* The Muslim Gujjars' Hiñdû cousins still live in Râjasthân and Gujarât, especially in Kâthiâwâd. They speak the same Râjasthâni language and look similar. Therefore, the Himâlayan Gujjars could well have migrated from these parts of western India to the Himâlayas, perhaps in the 6th and 7th centuries A.D.

*In which parts of the state do the Gujjars live?* In all districts of the State, except Leh. The nomads among them spend almost exactly six months each in the plains and on mountain pastures. The winter home in the plains is in Jammû or Kathuâ (or Pathânkot/ Gurdâspur in neighbouring Punjâb). The summer home in the mountains could be in Jammû province (Dodâ or Udampur) or Kashmîr (Urî, Ganderbal, Ânañtnâg, Daksum, Wâñgat/ Kangan, above Dâchigâm or in one of several pastures in the other districts) or even Kargil/ Zâñskâr. Gujjars also live in big numbers in Râjourî and Poonch.

*Physical appearance:* The nomadic Dodhi ('milk') Gujjars and Bakerwâls are normally tall and well-built. They live long, walk tall and erect and suffer from few ailments. The men are around six feet tall, extremely muscular and have long beards (dyed red with henna when they start greying). They all wear turbans and the shalwâr-qameez. The women wear colourful clothes and jewellery that are not very different from those worn by tribals in Râjasthân and Gujarât.

However, Gujjars who have given up their nomadic life and have settled down are neither tall nor muscular nor even disease-free. They walk with the same slouch as the rest of us and have a similar life-expectancy.

*Annual migration:* Every mid-April the nomadic Gujjars and Bakerwâls migrate from the plains of Jammû to the mountains. They return in October. Each journey takes around two weeks, because it is done on foot, and they take their flock (and horses) along. Increasingly the Gujjar elite has taken to doing the journey by jeep or truck, leaving it to their servants to trek up (or down) with the flock.

The summerhouses of the nomads are very simple mud and dried-grass structures called 'kothâs' and 'bandîs'.

*Politics:* The Muslim Gujjars of the State are quite close to their Hiñdû brethren in central and western India. The better-off ones meet each other frequently. In every war with Pâkistân they have helped the Indian Army enormously. In 1965, it was a Muslim Gujjar, Lâl Dîn, who alerted the Indian Army to the fact that Pâkistânî infiltrators had entered India. He was awarded a *Padma Shri*, a high national award, for this. In 1999, some



Bakerw  ls in Kargil told the Indian Army that P  kist  n   forces had captured the unguarded mountain peaks of that district.

The Gujjars and Bakerw  ls, like most other rural Muslims of the state (and parts of P  kist  n), follow their own customary law, and not the Muslim Personal Law (shariat). They keep their disputes out of the courts. A committee of their elders settles all their disputes. The Gujjars have a high sense of ethics and propriety. Therefore, they have relatively few disputes in any case.

### The Dard-Sh  n People of Gur  z

The Dard-Sh  n community of Jamm   and Kashmir<sup>ii</sup> lives in Kargil (Lad  kh) and Gur  z. It is an ancient community that once had a major presence in the areas between (and including) north-eastern Afgh  nist  n and central Tibet. The theory is that the Dardic Aryans came to (undivided) India, established settlements in the P  m  r region and then branched out to Chitral and Gilgit. The ancient Greeks and Romans knew about, and were in touch with, this handsome Indo-Aryan community.

*Early references:* Herodotus mentioned this community. Pliny and Ptolemy wrote that the Dards lived in the mountains on the eastern border of River Indus. This is the region corresponding to present (undivided) Lad  kh and Kashmir. Sir Aurel Stein, the 19th century British scholar, wrote, "The Daradas [mentioned in *The R  j  tara  gin  *] are the modern Dards... Their seats, which do not seem to have changed since the time of Herodotus, extend from Chitr  l and Y  s  n [both in POK], across the Indus regions of Gilgit, Chilas, and Bunji [also in POK] to the Kishengang   Valley in the immediate north of Kashmir. The tribes inhabiting the latter valley [Kishengang  ] are meant in most of the passages in which the chronicle [*The R  j  tara  gin  *] mentions the Daradas or Darads."

The Dardist  n region is mostly in the Northern Areas of POK and partly in India (Gur  z, Tilail and Drass). The D  -H  nu region of Lad  kh has a sizeable Dard population but is not a part of this 'belt.'

*The people:* There is near-unanimity among anthropologists that the Dards are Aryans. Indeed, some Aryan 'nationalists' from Germany have been celebrating the unadulterated Aryanness of the Dards of D  -H  nu in Lad  kh. (See the volume on 'Lad  kh'). This fascination among some Germans for the Dards probably has its origin in Leitner's writings, in which he had certified the Dards' Aryanness.

They have a caste-system very similar to that of the Hi  nd  s. The castes, in the traditional order of hierarchy, are: (i) Ronu or Renu   (ruling class), (ii) Shins (religious sect), (iii) Yashkun (cultivators), and (iv) Dum (menial class). Incidentally, the caste name Dum is also found among the Muslims



of the plains of Kashmîr and among Hiñdûs of, Jammû, again at the same place in the hierarchy.

The Dards of Guréz are entirely Muslim. In Kargil many Dards retain their old faith, some have been influenced by Buddhism and many have converted to Islâm.

*Language:* The Dard-Shîn people speak Shînâ, a language that is rapidly heading towards extinction. The Dards have taken to Urdû both in the Indian State of Jammû and Kashmîr and in POK. People in Chilas and Gilgit have switched to Urdu in a bigger way because their area is not as inaccessible from the plains of Pâkistân as the Guréz Valley (see 'Bârâmullâ') is from the rest of India. This language and the related culture are somewhat better maintained in Guréz, and flourish best in Kargil (Ladâkh).

Shîna is much like Hindi-Urdu and, sometimes, English. ('Two' is 'du' and 'three' is 'tera/ tre.') Their language is very Indo-Aryan. Actually, it is eerily close to Sañskrit. For instance, they call the sun 'suri' (from the Sañskrit 'surya'). Their word for 'hand' is 'hath.' The 'tongue' is called 'jeeb.'

*Politics:* The people of Guréz have consistently been nationalists. They have excellent relations with the Indian Army and have stayed away from the militancy of the 1990s. In all elections to the national Parliament and the State legislative assembly, especially those held after 1989, the people of Guréz-Tilel have turned up to vote in huge numbers. (As have the people of Tangdâr, Urî, Budgâm's Tsrâr-i-Sharief and Srînagar's Kangan.)

During the 2002 elections I discovered why. Around 11 in the morning I was accosted by an angry youth near Dâwar (the ancient capital of the Dards). He complained that the officers at the polling booth were clearing the long queue of voters at a very slow pace. At that rate all the adults of the village would not be able to vote by 4pm, when voting would come to an end.

Mathematically speaking he was absolutely right. But where in the world did one hundred per cent of the adults turn up to vote, I argued. In any case, I explained that all voters who entered the compound outside the booth before 4pm were entitled to vote, even if it meant keeping the booth open till seven in the evening.

In the event, voting continued in most parts of Guréz till slightly after eight that night. Every single adult who was present in that village (and many other parts of Guréz) and was not seriously ill came to vote.

Apparently, the community elders had ordered all Gurézis working, studying or otherwise living in Srînagar, Jammû, Bârâmullâ town or even Delhi to return to Guréz to cast their vote. Surely this makes the populace of remote and, often inaccessible, Guréz one of the most democracy-conscious people in the world.



*Ethnic groups:* The Dard-Shîns are the oldest inhabitants of Guréz. The Chak royal family, which ruled Kashmir in the 16th century and had influenced Kashmir's politics in the two preceding centuries, was of Dard stock. A hillock in Guréz is named after this clan and a spring after Habbâ Khâtoon, a poet who married a Chak king.

There is also a small community of Kashmirîs in Dâwar and Bagtor. And then there is a clan that was, till the 1950s, called Thag (the same as the Hiñdî-Urdû 'thug'). They are somewhat darker skinned than the Dards and Kashmirîs and are believed to have come from the plains of central India. They settled in Guréz and Kishtwâr (Dodâ, Jammû), perhaps to escape the anti-thuggee campaign of Lord William Bentinck (1738-1809). They converted to Islâm and borrowed the surname Lone from their Kashmirî neighbours. (See also the chapter on 'Bârânullâ.')

### The Kashmirî Pandits

In 1981, there were 1,24,078 Hindus in the Valley, or just under four percent of the population. Of these, around five to ten thousand Hiñdûs would have been the Punjâbis and Bhaderwâhîs living in Srînagar City and the handful of Dogrâ Rajpûts settled in the rural areas. The rest were all Kashmirî Pandits, a tiny, talented community of Brâhmins.

By way of comparison, writing in the 1890s, Lawrence recorded that there were 52,576 Hiñdûs in Kashmir. Of them, 28,695 lived in Srînagar and the small towns. Another 23,881 Hiñdûs lived in the rural areas.

By 1931, their population had grown to 64, 809 in all of Kashmir (in a population of 13.31 lakh/ 1.33 million, or 4.86% of the total).

However, those are not all the Kashmirî Pandits that there are. Over the centuries an equally substantial Kashmirî Pandit community has grown outside the State—in Delhi, Allahabad, Lucknow, the Punjâb, Himachal Pradesh and even Madhya Pradesh. They do not speak Kashmirî any more but retain their customs and till the 1950s would almost invariably marry within the community. (Most still do.) The Pandits who continue to live in Kashmir call their cousins (who migrated to the rest of India before the twentieth century) 'Butt Punjayb.' ('Butt' and 'pun' pronounced as in English).

Within the State, there have for centuries been a few thousand Kashmirî Pandits in Kishtwâr, plus a few families in Poonch-Râjouri. Since 1947, another few thousand have settled elsewhere in Jammû province, mainly in Jammû City.

Migration has been a recurrent theme in the history of this mostly light skinned community. Quite a few people from Mangalore (Karnataka), most of them equally fair skinned and with surnames like Rai and Rao, say that their ancestors were Kashmirî Pandits who had migrated from Kashmir



around the 9th century A.D. So do several Saraswat Brâhmins of Mahârâshtra and Goa. (There is more about this, and the points raised in the next paragraph, in 'The History of Kashmîr'.)

Today the Kashmîrî Pandits of the State celebrate their main festival, *Shivarâtrî*, on two different days, according to whether or not their ancestors had migrated from Kashmîr during the reign of Sultan Sikander, the so-called idol breaker (1389-1413). The Pandits believe that all but eleven families of Kashmîrî Pandits fled the Valley to the plains during this period. The descendants of these eleven families form a tiny minority called Malamâs. They celebrate *Shivarâtrî* according to Kashmîr's own, lunar calendar.

(The route that the fleeing Kashmîrî Pandits, locally known as the Butts, took while leaving the Valley corresponds to what is now known as the National Highway between Srînagar and Jammû. There is a place on the highway called Batote, or butt-vat: 'the path that the Butts took'.)

Shortly after Sikander came the great Emperor Zain-ul-Abedin. He persuaded the Kashmîrî Pandits who had fled to return to Kashmîr. The descendants of this group, which constitutes the majority, are called Bânamâs. Having lived in mainland India, they had taken to celebrating *Shivarâtrî* along with other Hindus, and do so to this day. (The words Malamâs and Bânamâs mean 'lunar calendar' and 'solar calendar' respectively.)

All Kashmîrî Pandits are Shaivites, worshippers of Lord Shiva. However, their main temple is the Râm Hanumân inspired Khîr Bhawânî at Tulmulâ near Srînagar. The Shankarâchârya, the Shiva temple that towers over all of Srînagar, is frequented more by Dogrâ Hindus and tourists.

The Afghân rulers of Kashmîr (1752-1819) patronised this highly educated community, appointing them to high office not only in Kashmîr but taking them along to Kabul and giving them even higher positions (including Prime Minister) there. (To get an idea of the depth of Afghân-K.P. amity, see also 'Surnames and nicknames' in this chapter.) This was the first major State patronage that they received after Sultan Zain-ul-Abedin (1420-70).

The Sikhs and the Dogrâs succeeded the Afghâns. Because of their high literacy the Kashmîrî Pandits continued to man the middle and lower bureaucracy, a few families rising to the top. In the twentieth century many of them became lawyers, doctors, journalists, scientists, playwrights, artists and teachers. Their skills were in demand in the Mughal bureaucracy, too. The Nehrus, who were the '*kotwals*' (police chief) of Delhi under the later Mughals (nineteenth century), are the best known example. After the accession of the State to India in October 1947, some Pandits also took to commerce: an upmarket grocer's here, a pharmacy there and the occasional luxury hotel. At the time of their migration in 1990, just under 19,000 Kashmîrî Pandits (or almost every sixth Pandit) were government servants.



Because of the unfortunate events of 1990, more than ninety percent of the community left Kashmir between January and April, hoping to return as soon as things settled down. Militancy, however, continued in a big way for more than a decade. During this period the Kashmiri Pandits set up house mostly in Jammû City but also in Udhampur, Delhi, Mumbai and the USA, doing very well in the professions, even commerce.

The name that the community goes by is somewhat misleading. Very few Kashmiri Pandits are priests. Mrs. Jaijaiwanti Parimu, a writer and educationist whom I consulted for several details used in this section, estimates that only around a seventh of the members of her community actually performed religious duties at any stage of history. This sub-group is called Bâchh Bhatt and has surnames like Zadoo, Ganzoo (not Ganju), Kharoo, Sharma and Dutt.

The majority of Kashmiri Pandits are Kârkuns: professionals and civil servants. In the second half of the twentieth century, even among those whose ancestors were priests very few had any connection with their ancestral function any more. (This is true of the Brâhmins of many other parts of India as well. It is impossible to find Jammû Brâhmins who are willing to act as full-time priests at any of the hundreds of temples lying unmanned in Jammû.)

The Kârkuns consider themselves socially superior to the priestly clan. Traditionally the two did not inter-marry. The division between the Kârkuns (government servants) and the Bâchh Bhatt (priestly class) took place during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abedin aka Budshah (1420-1470). The Sultan had employed several Kashmiri Pandits in his government. It is believed that it was this State patronage that led to the formation of two clans within the community. Budshah's time must have been one of enormous ferment and reorganisation in this community: it was also then that the Malamâs-Bânamâs division took place.

(Historian G.M.D. Sufi adds, 'A third section is the Jotish or astrologer class which intermarry (sic) with the Kârkun.' )

However, none of these sub-groups deigns to marry members of the Bohri sub-group. 'They eat and live differently,' I was told. This group is supposed to have converted briefly ('for one night') to Islâm before coming back to the Hindu fold. Now, mere conversion does not change food habits and other customs, and certainly not immediately. I once came upon a reference to a clan of Vohras (Punjâbi Khatris: who belong to the business caste) who had migrated to Kashmir in late mediæval times and got absorbed in the Kashmiri Pandit community. My theory is that the Bohris are descendants of those Vohras.



So, can non-Brâhmins become Brâhmins? Studies conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India, under the scholar-civil servant Singh, indicate that caste was not as rigid as the British Raj would have us believe. While studying mediæval Kashmîr, I noticed that (Muslim) Rainâs had descended from the Rajpût warrior caste. Some (Hindu) Kashmîrî Pandits have the same surname. Clearly, a handful of Rainâs remained Hindu even after the majority of their clan had converted to Islâm. These Rainâs, who probably numbered one or two hundred, were too few to maintain an independent identity. For one, Hindus can't marry within their own clan, so you need other clans to marry into. So, these Rainâs probably merged with the Pandits, who weren't too numerous either.

Kashmîrî Pandit elders don't reject my theory outright. I am told that that there are Kârkun Rainâs, priestly Rainâs as well Rainâs whose ancestors were Rajpûts. (Some Rainas of Jammû-Himachal are carpenters.) The Vohrâs (or Bohrâs or Bohrîs) might likewise have latched on, without having been accepted fully.

At the bottom of the Kashmîrî Pandit ladder have traditionally been the cooks and chefs: the 'wâzâs' and 'kânders', mostly from the Deosar area. Today, even this group is too literate to cook for others, and has entered the professions. So, now the Kashmîrî Pandits get their 'wazas' and 'kanders' from Kishtwâr.

The mass-migration of the Kashmîrî Pandits in 1990 has blurred a lot of intra-caste distinctions, though. This includes distinctions between the Bohrîs and the Pañdâs, the kânders and the wâzas.)

(The kânders are mostly nânwâis [rural bakers]. The Hiñdû wâzâ or wâz came from Luk Bhawânî and Ânañtnâg. The Pañdâs are almost entirely from Mattan.)

### Surnames and nicknames

So deep-rooted was the Kashmîrî Pandits' friendship with the Afghâns and their identification with Afghân culture that they adopted Persian/ Afghân surnames such as Adeeb (literateur), Râzdân and Bakâyâ and Safâyâ (both connected with the treasury). They also adopted Central Asian, and thitherto Muslim, titles such as Bakhshi and Chaudhari. (The last two titles were bestowed on Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and even Christians throughout the sub-continent.) Durrânis are Afghâns and Mirzas are Turks: but the Kashmîrî Pandits were given these two surnames, too. More interestingly, they took on names apparently connected with the Islâmic religion: Qazi (Islâmic judge) and even Mulla (Muslim priest). Above all, you will find Agas among Kashmîrî Pandits. (An Aga is a Muslim spiritual-cum-temporal leader, headman, and aristocrat, normally a Shia from Iran.)



Sometimes you can tell about a Muslim's ancestry by his surname. All genuine Syeds, of course, are descendants of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, and thus of Arab origin. Meers, Mirzas and Bandedys are supposed to be Turks but, as we have seen, this isn't always the case. In most of South Asia a Khân is supposed to be a Pathan (Pushtûn), but in Kashmir and Kargil it's a title given to countless others. Some of the rural Turks that I have lived with go by the name Khân.

Muslims with surnames like Pandit, Bhat/ Butt, Wânchoo, Wâni, Khândey and Ganâi are descendants of local converts.

There is a huge tradition of nicknames in Kashmir: among both the Muslims and the Pandits. I have a colleague called Abdul Ahad who at one stage was obsessed with the teaching of history. So, he was nicknamed Ahad 'History'. Another colleague's father owns Victory Carpets. So, the common man knows her as Tanveer 'Victory'. Those who lived by the canal (neher) were reportedly given the name Nehru and those by a bridge (kadal) Kadlabju. Parimu means 'the foreigner,' perhaps referring to some ancestor who had come from or gone abroad. (It is this name that suggests that some foreigners-possibly Jews-were absorbed into the Kashmiri fold well before the advent of Islâm. There is a neighbourhood called Pârimpurâ, 'the township of the foreigners'.)

Normally, however, there's a tinge of sarcasm, even malice, in these names. A professor who went on to earn a name as a principled politician was nicknamed 'Siyasi' (the political one) during his years as a teacher, because even then he dabbled a lot in politics.

Over the centuries these nicknames (called rehtchh or simply rets) have hardened into surnames. Mushran means 'ugly like a fierce demon'. Mothers warn their children that if they don't behave a 'mushran' will gobble them up. Briefly, around 1990, Bombay had a film actor whose ancestors had been saddled with this surname. The literateur Chakbast had ancestors who ate sour rice (tsok= sour). Khar (including Kher, as in the film actor) means donkey. Hâk(t)sar is a worm that feeds on the hâk variety of spinach. Thâl(t)soor is a person who steals utensils (thâli), and this is the name of a ranking family.

Char people and sweepers, unfortunately, had been assigned an extremely low position in Hindu society in particular, and in South Asia in general. In Kashmir they are known as wattals. An eminent Kashmiri Pandit family once gave refuge to some wattals. As a result the host family and its descendants have the surname Wattal.



Most illustrative of this phenomenon is the family now called Taing. A mulberry tree (tul) grew in their backyard. Out of fear that they would be, teasingly, nicknamed Tul, they got the tree uprooted. This resulted in a pit (khoda) where the tree used to be. So, they were promptly nicknamed Khodâ. This bothered them and they brought some earth to fill up the pit with. However, they got more earth than was required and a small mound (taing) of earth was created where the pit was. Not to be outdone, their detractors decided to call them Taing.

### References

- i. Most of the figures in these paragraphs are from Geo-administrative order of Mahârâjâ's J&K by Daya Sagar, *The Daily Excelsior*, Jammû, February 11, 2001. Administrative units and figures regarding area have been shown as they stood on the 14th August, 1947.
- ii. Sources include Majid Hussain's website and the photocopy of an anonymous case study 'Gathering history from the ground: a case study of Guréz and Tilail.' The language used in the two is sometimes identical.



## Were the Kashmîrîs Jews?

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There is a whole body of scholarship that seeks to prove that the Kashmîrîs (including the Pandits) are one of the lost tribes of Israel. Some of the arguments in favour are fairly convincing and are based on similarities of language, customs and facial features.

While touring a Kashmîri village with a Mridu Rai, then a University of Columbia-based scholar and now with Yale, we came upon a circular Kashmîri bread (the tsacheroo) which looks and tastes exactly like the Jewish bagel. Thus, clearly there was considerable cultural exchange between Kashmîr and ancient Israel-and possibly the migration of a few Hebrews to Kashmîr.

However, there is no historical evidence of a major migration from Israel. Besides, some of the 'evidence' given in support of the theory is childish.

For example, when the Kashmîrîs address a person with respect they call him 'joo.' This, we are told, is the same word as 'Jew.' Therefore, the Kashmîrîs are Jews! Firstly, ancient Jews would hardly call each other 'Jew'. Yahood, and its derivatives, would be more common. Secondly, in Ladâkhi 'joo' means the same as in Kashmîri. So, does that mean that the mostly Caucasoid Kashmîrîs are descended from the Mongoloid Ladâkhis? Or that the Mongoloid Ladâkhis too were Jews? Preposterous. The fact is that 'joo' is a cousin of the Central Indian 'ji' and is used in exactly the same way, in both Kashmîr and Ladâkh.

Besides, there is absolutely no trace of the Jewish religion anywhere in Kashmîr.

### **Not homogeneous**

In any case, the people of the valley of Kashmîr do not belong to one, homogeneous ethnic group.

Only a small minority of Kashmîrîs has those 'Jewish' facial features, especially noses. Only around one half of all Kashmîrîs are even light



skinned. The other half, especially the poor and those in the villages, are born with the same complexion as that of most central Indians/ Pākistānis and with similar features, too.

A very large section of the population of the State, in Kashmîr, Jammû and Kargil, consists of the nomadic (and 'settled' or zameendar) Gujjars (cowherds) and Bakerwāls (shepherds). Some Gujjars trace their ancestry to Indian states like Gujarāt and Rājasthān. Others claim that their ancestors came from the former Soviet republic of Georgia (which, they say, is an abbreviation of 'Gurjaristan').

An equally big community is that of the Pahārhis. They, too, are Muslims, but they speak a language similar to Punjābi. Then there are Kashmîris of Dard origin.

The Syeds of Kashmîr are all of central Asian (Irani) or Arab (mainly Iraqi) origin. Then there is a substantial Turkish population. Not all Kashmîris with the surname 'Khân' are of Pathan (Pushtoon) stock. 'Khân' has been a local, Kashmîri title since mediæval times. All the same, there is in Kashmîr a small community of Pushtoon origin.

Some Kashmîris use the surname 'Mughal'. It stands to reason that almost two hundred years of Mughal rule would have left at least a small Mughal clan behind. Surely, Mirza Haidar Dughlat, the first 'Mughal' to rule Kashmîr, would have started a small Kazakh line, too. After all, he came to Kashmîr with an army.

There is also a small clan of Tibetan Muslims in Kashmîr.

Historians from neighbouring Kargil claim that people from their district first populated the Valley. And, as everyone knows, the first king of Kashmîr to convert to Islām was Rinchen Shah, a Ladākhi prince of Tibetan origin.

Many of the Shias of Kashmîr produce family trees going back to Iran and Iraq.

### Origins of the belief

There is no reference to the Kashmîris, or even some of them, having migrated from Israel (or anywhere other than the Indian plains) in any of Kashmîr's several splendid histories. The *Rājātaraṅginī* and its sequels don't mention it. The anonymous *Baharistan-e-Shahi* (16th and 17th centuries) doesn't either. Nor do the mediæval historians Syed Ali or Bîrbal Kâchrû.

So, this belief essentially originated in the late 19th century. British Rāj scholars, some of who were past-masters at spreading divisive tendencies, noted that several Kashmîris had Jewish faces and hooked noses of the Hebraic type.

The theory is that when King Nebuchadnezzar started murdering Jews in Palestine, most of them fled to safer lands. Kashmîr was one of them.



The belief started taking root in the 20th century. That was when some Kashmiri scholars, Pandit and Muslim alike, were trying to assert an identity that had nothing to do with the rest of India (or Pākistān). Muslim scholars from places as far apart as Lahore (Pākistān) and Bijnore (UP) fuelled the belief. The majority of Kashmiris have obviously descended from Hindus who had converted to Islām. Therefore, it became necessary to prove that Kashmir's original Hindu population was itself of Jewish origin.

Pandit Hargopal Kaul was one of the first Kashmiris to do so. His *Tārīkh-e-Guldastā-e-Kashmīr* refers to the oldest mention of migration to Kashmir. This is contained in the memoirs of a man who had never visited Kashmir: the Mughal Emperor Bābur. All Babur did was to speculate that the word 'Kashmīr' might have derived from 'Kash', a tribe from the hills, which migrated through the Sind pass. Even he did not talk of Jewish origins or lost tribes of Israel.

The only other mediæval reference to this belief is by Dr. Francois Bernier (1620-1688) who noted that 'the inhabitants in the frontier villages struck me as resembling Jews'. So, till the 19th century all we have are stray mentions in the accounts of foreigners that some Kashmiris resembled the Jews. Nothing in Kashmir's own formidable historiography. Certainly nothing about migration from Israel.

## The arguments for and against

### *Historical references*

*For:* Al Beruni, the noted historian (A.D. 973-1048), travelled to places close to Kashmir, perhaps up to Rājouri. Aziz Kashmiri, the author of some excellent books on the subject, quotes him as saying of the Kashmiris, 'They are particularly anxious about the natural strength of their country and, therefore, take always much care to keep a strong hold upon the entrances and roads leading into it... In former times, they used to allow one or two foreigners to enter their country, particularly the Jews. But at present do not allow any Hindu whom they do not know personally to enter much less other people.'

This explains the numerous imprints of Jewish culture on Kashmir: on the Kashmiri language and on the beliefs of the Kashmiri people. It also indicates how the bagel might have come to Kashmir.

Mathew feels that 'the white Huns (Naphtalites, [were] one of the lost tribes of Israel).' This dynasty ruled Kashmir from c.A.D. 528 to around A.D. 600. Its members were custodians of the sun temple at Mārtañd.<sup>1</sup>

1 And from Mārtañd they migrated to Keralā where they came to be known as Nambūdiri Brāhmins, Mathew adds.



They had certainly come from a country in the west-possibly Afghânistân. Thus, the white Huns could well have been Jewish. From the histories it would seem that just a handful of them-not more than a few dozen-had sought refuge in Kashmîr. So, even if they were Jewish they would account for an infinitesimal proportion of the population.

*For:* The hill known currently as the Shankarâchârya hill was called the Gopâdri hill/ Jyesth Lidder/ Jyestheshvar in older times: Most Kashmîri Muslims believe that this is the Throne of Solomon (Takht-e-Suleiman). This is adduced as proof of the Kashmîris' Jewish origin.

*Against:* Not just the Jews but Muslims and Christians, too, hold Solomon in high regard.

More important, it is on record that it was the great 14th century Persian saint, the Shâh-é-Hamadân, who named Kashmîr the Bâgh-e-Suleiman, the Garden of Solomon. All references to the Garden or Throne of Solomon date to after the 15th century.

In any case, there is a theory that Christ lived in Kashmîr. According to it, the Garden and Throne of Solomon have been named after a Persian noble called Suleiman, and not the Biblical Solomon.

*For:* The boatmen (hânjis) of Kashmîr claim to be descendants of Noah.

*Against:* The story of Hazrat-e-Nooh (Noah) is identical to that of the Hindu saint Manu (Ma-noo). So this argument gets us nowhere.

*For:* Some of the arguments in favour of the 'Kashmîris-are-Jews' theory border on the ridiculous. Votaries of the theory approvingly quote Pt. Hargopal Kaul's strange, self-contradictory statement, 'Muslims are tall, strong and vulgar like Jews, with the exception of the gentle ones.'

*Against:* Neither community is (or was in Pt. Kaul's time) vulgar. The Jews have dominated Europe's (and now New York's) world of science, commerce, classical music, psychology and the social sciences for more than three centuries now. The handicrafts, cuisine and historiography of Kashmîr have no equal in South Asia. The Kashmîris are certainly taller than Jammûites. But by absolute standards (and by those of the neighbouring Gujjars, Bakerwâls and Punjâbis) most Kashmîri men are of medium height.

*For:* Moses (Musa) is a very common name in Kashmîr.

*Against:* Is it? I find it more common among the very Indo-Aryan Gujjars of the Himâlayas. I know Tamil and other Muslims called Musa. (The Tamilians are supposed to be of Mediterranean Caucasoid descent.) Does this prove that the Jews and Tamilians, too, are of Jewish origin?

*Similarities between the Kashmîri language and Hebrew*

*Against:* It is argued that there are many words in the Kashmîri language that correspond to Hebrew words. Thus Kashmîri must be an offshoot of



Hebrew. Indeed, there are many such words. However, Urdu-speaking Muslims of Central India and P  kist  n also use most of these words. Let us look at some of the words offered as proof:

Hebrew	Kashmiri	The meaning	But...
ab	bab	father	'Bab' is further from 'ab' than the 'abba' and 'abu' used for 'father' by Urdu-speaking Muslims. 'Ab' is an Arabic word.
Aoh	auh	'Oh!'	Hindi-(and English-) speakers, too, use this exclamation.
Akh	akh	one	Hindi, Urdu and Punj��bi have similar words for 'one': eik, ik.
Arah	arah	saw	Hindi-Urdu speakers use the word '��r��'.
Ahad	ahad	one	Urdu speakers use 'v��hid', a derivation of 'ahad', to describe the singular. The name Ah��d is from the Holy Qur��n.
Adar	chadar	blanket	If words like this are 'proof,' then the whole argument collapses. All North Indians use the word 'chadar,' which is from the Persian language.
Aaz	��z	today	Hindi-Urdu speakers use '��j'. Most traditional Kashmiris say 'z' when they mean 'j'. Clearly ��z is ��j pronounced in the local fashion.
aosh	aosh	tears	Corresponds to the Sa��skrit 'ashroo'.
Abital	abtal	under water	Derived from 'ab', which in Urdu-Persian, too, means 'water'. 'Tal' has a meaning similar to 'under' in Hindi-Urdu as well.
and	gand	knot	The Kashmiri 'gand' is identical to the Punj��bi 'gand' (also meaning 'knot') and the Hindi-Urdu 'g��n��h'. Resemblance with the Hebrew 'and' is far-fetched.
B��l	b��l	spring	Corresponds to the Urdu 'b��oli'.
Beneh	beneh	sister	Corresponds to the Hindi 'behen' (sister) and the Urdu-Arabic 'binnat'.
Dafah	dafah	to turn out	It's the same in Urdu.
gair	gair	not related	It means the same in Urdu.
ghabar	gubar	young son	Corresponds to the Urdu-Punj��bi 'ghabroo' (youth), as well.
j��l	j��l	to deceive	Means the same in Urdu, too.
jabur	jabur	to force	'Jabar' and 'zabar' have the same meaning in Urdu.

Contd.



Contd.

mazah	mazah	to taste	'Mazah' means '[to] taste' in Urdu, whereas in Hebrew it means 'to suck'. Which is closer to the Kashmiri word?
Mehar	mahar	dowry	Now this is too much. 'Meher' is an Arabic word, an Islâmic concept, which has travelled to all Muslim lands, not just Kashmir.
noor	noor	light	Again hardly unique to Kashmir. 'Noor' means the same in Arabic and Urdu and is from the Holy Qur'ân.
qadam	qadam	step	Means the same in Urdu.
qabar	qabar	grave	Means the same in Arabic and Urdu.
qatal	qatal	murder	Means the same in Urdu.
rasah	rasah	confirmation	The Kashmiri word is, in fact, closer to the Persian-Urdu 'rasah'.
Sahar	sahar	dawn	Means the same in Urdu.
sidiq	sidiq	truthful	Means the same in Arabic-Urdu and is from the Holy Qur'ân.
shas	shas	breathing	'Breathing' is 'shwas' in Saṁskrit and 'sâns' in Hindi.
Tuok	thook	spit	Means the same in Hindi-Urdu.
tumum	tamam	all	The Kashmiri word is, in fact, closer to the Urdu 'tamam'.
Zabeh	zabeh	to slaughter	Means the same in Urdu.
zinah	zinah	adultery	'Zinah' is an Arabic word, an Islâmic concept, which has travelled to all Muslim lands, not just Kashmir.
ziker	ziker	to remember mention	Means the same in Arabic-Urdu. and is an Islâmic concept.

The conclusion is obvious. The Kashmiri language got these words not from Hebrew, but from Arabic (through Islâmic texts) and Persian. The Quran Sharief, the Hadith and many Islâmic texts in Arabic. Almost all Islâmic concepts are in either Arabic or Persian. Almost 95% of the population of Kashmir has been Muslim for several centuries now. There were contacts with Arab soldiers (and one prominent Arab refugee, Hameem) even before Muslim missionaries from Irâq and Irân came to Kashmir. As for Persian, it was the court and literary language of Kashmir between the 15th and early 20th centuries.

Now, Hebrew is so similar to its sibling, Arabic. It has much in common with neighbouring Persian, too. Is it, then, very difficult to see why there are so many Hebrew (or Arabic-Persian) words in the Kashmiri language?



As we have seen, they are there in Urdu, too. If the presence of Hebrew words in a people's language proves that they are Jews, then all Indian, Pākistānī, Afghān and Persian Muslims, too, must be Jews.

*For:* The above, however, are only words of caution. The fact is that there are an equal number of Hebrew words in the Kashmiri language that are not found in Urdu. The word for 'cruel', Aziz Kashmiri points out, is 'Nebuchadnezzar' in Hebrew and 'Buchnasar' in Kashmiri. Srinagar has a suburb called Harwan. In Urdu, 'Harwan' is spelt the same as 'Hâroon', the Muslim name for 'Aaron'. All this clearly shows an exchange of ideas between the two languages, even if it doesn't prove that both peoples are of the same race.

### Similarities in architecture

*For:* Apparently the tiles found at the Harwan ruins have motifs identical to those found in Babylon: cocks, deer, men with beards, Roman numerals (which Aziz Kashmiri calls 'Hebrew figures'), women with water pots, and so on. Kashmiri says that the walls at Harwan are made of pebbles, which is also true of the architecture of Syria and Palestine. (And, may I add, of Dogrā Hiñdū architecture.)

Regarding the Mārtañd temple, Kashmiri quotes Dr. James Ferguson as saying, 'The temple is a very small building, being only 60 feet in length and 38 feet in width; the width of [the] façade, however, is eked out by two wings as adjuncts which make it of 60 feet; also it realizes [sic] the problem the Jews had so earnestly set themselves to solve—how to build a temple with three dimensions equal but yet not cubic.'

*Against:* It is argued in support of the arguments 'for' that 'The ancient monuments and ruins near Awantiporā, Mārtañd Temple at Kreveh Matton and at the Sulaiman [Shankarāchārya] hill, Srinagar, are that of Israelis in structures, stone eaves, and constructions and in no way represent the Buddhist or Hindu Art. [sic]'

Such arguments are so easy to shoot down that they provide cheap cannon fodder to opponents of the 'Kashmiris are Jews' theory. The three monuments listed are identical in style to their Hiñdū contemporaries in Jammū province. They are also very similar to the 10th-13th century Hindu-Buddhist Angkor Wat temples of Cambodia.

Aziz Kashmiri is on much firmer ground when he cites authority to show that there are Greek influences in the architecture of the temples of Mārtañd and Harwan. Of course, there are. And in the temples at Nārā Nāg and Awantiporā as well. The pillars/ columns, the triangular cornices and the pediments are all Hellenic. But the Greeks and the Jews are two very



## Names of places, castes and tribes

*For and against:*

An attempt has been made to show that the names of Kashmîrî villages, castes and 'tribes' have been mentioned in the Bible. Now, the Bible, especially the Chronicles, lists a few thousand names—of people and places. If you are prepared to stretch sounds a bit, you can find names from any given part of the world in the Bible. (Abba, the name of a 1970s Swedish pop group, is an acronym. It derives from the first letters of the names of the four members of the group. Yet, as they told the world, their name is there in the Bible: 'Abba, the father.')

I have cross-checked with the Bible each Kashmîrî name offered as 'proof.' The results are as follows:

*Names of places*

It is argued that 'it is obvious that when Banni Israel settled in Kashmîr, they kept the very names of the places, which they had in their own motherland.' (Emphasis mine.)

Place in Kashmîr (or nearby)	Name mentioned in the Bible	Reference	On cross-checking with the Bible I found that it was...
Achâbal	Ash'bel	Gen. 46:21	the name of a person.
Amairah	Am-a-ri'ah	I Chron. 23:19	the name of a person.
Araham	Ara	I Chron. 7:38	the name of a person.
Arahbal	Arah	I Chron. 7:39	the name of a person.
Asham	Ash'i-ma	II Kings, 17:30	a place, but it is closer to the Sanskrit 'Ashimâ.'
Astor	Ash'toreth	I Kings, 11:5	the name of a goddess.
Barzilla	Bar-zil-la'i	I Kings, 2:7	the name of a person.
Beithpoer	Beith-pe'or	Deut., 34:6	a place. A good argument. (But see 'Christ in Kashmîr.')
Doru	Dor	I Kings, 4:11	a region. Good argument.
Gadha	Gad	I Chron. 2:2	the name of a person.
Gilgath	Gol'go-tha	Matt. 27:33	a place. But the similarity is extremely weak.
Harwan	Ha'ran	II Kings, 19:12	the name of a person.
Hasbal	Hesh'bon	Deut., 4:46	a place, but the similarity is extremely weak.
Himas	Ha'math	Numbers 13:21	a place.
Keran	Che'ran	I Chron. 1:41	the name of a person.

Contd.



Contd.

Kishtwâr	Cush	Gen. 10:6	the name of a person. He is the son of Ham and father of Ra'a-mah. You decide if Cush is closer to 'Kishtwâr' or to Lav.
Ladâkh	La'a-dah	I Chron. 4:21	a person. Is even predominantly Mongoloid Ladâkh supposed to be Jewish?
Leh	Le'hi	Judges 15:9	a place. Ditto: the Mongoloid Ladâkhis are the least likely people in the world to be Jewish?
Ludu	Lud	I Chron. 1:17	the name of a person.
Moab	Moab	Deut., 34:6	a place.
Poonch	Phe-ni'ce	Acts, 11:19	'a distant place.'
Shopian	Sho'phan	Numbers 32:35	a place. Convincing.
Tibet	Tib'hath	I Chron. 18:8	'a city near Chun.' Convincing.
Urî	Urî	Exodus, 31:2	the name of a person.

*Conclusion:* Some of the arguments are convincing and some rather far-fetched. Most of the arguments 'for' are based on very weak phonetic similarities.

#### *Names of communities*

*For and against:* When I read that quintessentially Kashmiri names like Kaul, Dar, Dhar, Rainâ, Razdan, Magre, Moza, Katru and Wani were mentioned in the Bible, I was convinced that no further proof was needed. The Kashmiris were Jews: all native Kashmiris were. However, on cross-checking these nine names with the Bible I only found Moza there in its pristine form. For the rest one has to stretch things a bit. And as for the clan name 'Kaul', it resembles not a Biblical name but the English word 'caul.' This word does not occur in the translations of the Bible into most other languages.

Here is the factual position. You decide how close the resemblance is.

Name of Kashmiri clan	Name as mentioned in the Bible	Reference
Amal	A'mal	I Chron 7:35
Atal	At'tai	I Chron. 12:11
Bakru	Be'cher, Boch'eru	I Chron. 7:6, 8:38
Bal, Bala	Ba'al	I Chron. 5:5
Dar, Dhar	Dor (a region, not tribe)	I Kings, 4:11
Dum	Du'mah	I Chron. 1:30

Contd.



Contd.

Gaddar	Ge'dor	I Chron. 4:4
Gadha	Gad	I Chron. 2:2
Guni	Gu'ni	I Chron. 7:13
Haroon	Hezron	I Chron. 2:5
Hukak	Hu'kok	I Chron. 6:75
Ishui	Ish'u-i (good point)	I Sam. 14:49
Kanah	Ka'nah (place)	Jos. 19:28
Kar	Ca-re'ah	II Kings 25:23
Katru	Ke-tu'rah	Gen. 25:4
Kaul	Caul (see note)	Isa. 3:18
Lavi	Levi	I Chron. 2:1
Māleh	Ma-al'eh (a place)	Jos. 15:3
Magrey	Ma'gor	Jer. 20:3
Mallek	Mal'luch	I Chron. 6:44
Mearah	Me-ar'ah	Jos. 13:4
Minto	Min'nith	Judges 11:33
Moza	Mo'za	I Chron. 8:36
Mushi	Mu'shi	I Chron. 6:19
Naiku	Nechoh	II Kings 23:29
Nehru	Nahor	I Chron. 1:26
Pau	Puah	I Chron. 7:1
Rainā	Rinnah	I Chron. 4:20
Razdan	Rezon	I Kings 11:23
Réshī	Rhe'sa	Luke 3:27
Shamir	Sha'mir	I Chron. 24:24
Shora	She'rah	I Chron. 7:24
Thapal	To'phel	Deut. 1:1
Tiku	Te-ko'a	I Chron. 2:24
Wani	Va-ni'ah	Ezra 19:36

(Notes: Mallik is a title found among central Asians, Indonesians, Indian Hindus and Muslims everywhere, 'Caul' is an English word for either a membrane or the smooth part at the back of a woman's hat. From the context 'caul' appears to be a part of the human body. As used in the Bible, 'caul' probably means 'A portion of the amnion, especially when it covers the head of a fetus at birth.' 'Nehru', as a surname, probably did not exist till the 17th or 18th century A.D. On the other hand, the Biblical name 'Nahor' is closer to the central Indian/ Bengali 'Nahar'. Kar is a Bengali name, too. Therefore, the Bengalis must all be Jews. Besides, both communities like the cinema. 'She'rah' is a feminine first name. 'Haroon'



is the Arabic name for 'Aaron'. It is popular in several parts of South Asia and the Muslim world, especially Pākistān's Sind. It is hardly a name unique to Kashmir. 'Wani' is pronounced 'wain' as well. 'Vaniah' is closer to the north Indian 'Baniya' and the Tamil 'Vanniyar'. You decide whether the Kashmiri 'Rēshī,' meaning saint, is closer to the Saṅskrit 'rishī,' also meaning saint, or the Jewish Rhe'sa, which is a name with no assigned meaning. Atal is a Saṅskrit name from the Hīṇḍū texts. And it does not resemble At'tai at all.)

### Customs

*For:* The Jews say nasty things about you behind your back. So do the Kashmiris. Therefore, the Kashmiris have descended from the Jews.

*Against:* In that case the entire population of the world is Jewish.

That ('For') is the kind of logic used by votaries of the theory. Both peoples sleep naked at night. Therefore, they are of the same stock. (People in most cold lands sleep naked at night. The British have traditionally done so. The people of Kargil [Ladākh], Banni [Jammū], Sweden and many parts of Northern Europe still do. Does that make them all Jews?)

Jewish priests sound trumpets; Kashmiri Pandit priests blow into conch shells, 'thereby confirming the fact of being the descendants of Israelis or Jews'. (Hindu priests blow into conch shells in most parts of India. Thus, all Hindus must be descendants of the Jews.)

Kashmiri bridegrooms sometimes live permanently with their in-laws, rather than with their own parents. So do some Jews. (The Buddhists of Ladākh have an elaborate institution, the *makpa*, to sanctify such an arrangement. Hindus and Muslims of the rest of South Asia sometimes do the same. Therefore, the Mongoloid Buddhists must all be Jews, too.)

One of the most ridiculous arguments in favour of this belief is this: 'The Kashmiris circumcise their male children-and so do the Jews. Therefore, they belong to the same race.' Now, as we all know, Muslims everywhere have adopted male circumcision. Obviously this 'sunnat' (tradition) came to Kashmir with Islām-as did so many Jewish customs and words that Islām has absorbed worldwide. Had the Jews-and not Muslim missionaries-brought this custom to Kashmir, then even Kashmiri Pandits would have adopted it. After all, Jews are supposed to have come to Kashmir several centuries before Islām did, and even Kashmiri Hīṇḍūs are supposed to be the descendants of Jews.

The very fact that not a single Kashmiri Pandit clan practises circumcision proves that neither they nor the majority of Kashmiri Muslims have descended from the Jews. (The ancestors of most Kashmiri Muslims were Hīṇḍūs before their conversion to Islām.)



*For: Boats:* The end of oars that dips into the water is shaped like a heart in both lands. Both have flat-bottomed boats and gable-roofs. (The ends of most Kashmîrî oars are circular: though it is possible to glimpse the shape of a heart in them.)

*Childbirth:* Women in both lands bathe forty days after a child is born to them.

*Clothes:* The traditional costumes of women in the two lands are supposed to be similar.

*Dance:* Apparently Jewish women, too, dance to songs as in the case of the Kashmîrî 'roph/' 'roef'. The movements of the two dance forms seem to be similar.

*Graveyards and tombs:* Both plant brimage trees in their graveyards. Both have a tradition of east-west tombs. The Kashmîrîs later accepted the Muslim norm of north-south tombs. Aziz Kashmîrî gives us a list of some east-west tombs: Hâroon (i.e. Hârvan), Râjpurâ, Syed Bladur Sâheb, Koker Nag and Awantipurâ. More significantly, he points out that there is an ancient tomb in the graveyard at Bijbehera that has a Hebrew inscription. This conclusively proves that Kashmîr had a Jewish connection at some stage. (At least one grave in the Malkhah cemetery of Srinagar has a Saṅskrit inscription. It is the grave of a Lodi prince, not of a local convert. All that this grave proves is that Saṅskrit was still respected then.) In any case, there are only a few east-west tombs in all of Kashmîr. They were, thus, not a widespread practice.

*Worship:* There is a stone called '*Kâh Kâh Pal*' at Bijbehera (Anant Nag). It is said to be the stone of Moses. It is believed that eleven (*kâh*) people can together lift the stone with their fingers. (The figure eleven represents the tribes of Israel.) Bârâmulâ has a similar stone.

Muslims are not supposed to worship anyone but God. Yet many Kashmîrî Muslims go to the shrine of Harut and Marut, close to the Mârtaṇḍ Temple (Anant Nag). They ask the angels that are supposed to live there to get their prayers answered. This practise is certainly unIslâmic. Some say that these angels were worshipped in pre-Islâmic Babylon. Aziz Kashmîrî writes that the name of the village where this shrine has been built is Chahi Babel. That only deepens the mystery.<sup>2</sup> (See also 'Harut and Marut,' 'Aish Muqâm' and 'Pahalgâm' in the chapters on 'Ânaṭnâg' and 'Pahalgâm'.)

<sup>2</sup> Or does it? My investigations reveal that the name of the place is "Chhattâbal." One has to be slightly imaginative to read 'Chahi Babel' into this very Kashmîrî name. There is a Chhattabal in Srinagar, too.



### Conclusion

The Kashmîris do not all belong to the same ethnic group. Some of them certainly have facial features resembling those of the Jews. Indeed, there are some Hebrew words in the Kashmîri language. Most of these words are also Arabic words and are found in every Muslim land. Some Jewish customs and beliefs, too, are found in Kashmîr. There can be no doubt that Jews used to visit ancient, pre-Islâmic Kashmîr at the rate of one or two visitors a year. They were particularly honoured guests. This explains their stamp on some aspects of Kashmîri life. Some of them must have settled in Kashmîr and accepted Hinduism (and later Islâm). That explains why some Kashmîris, Hindus and Muslims alike, have the 'prominent noses' that have intrigued European travellers so much. The descendants of these 'foreigners' (parimûs) would account for less than one per cent of the population. However, the vast majority of Kashmîris have not descended from Jews.

### References

- i. The first three columns above, as well as all arguments in this section 'For' the belief, are based on Aziz Kashmîri's *Christ in Kashmîr*.
- ii. The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition © 1996 by Houghton Mifflin Company.



## The Clans and Sub-castes of Kashmîr

Two of my teenaged Kashmîrî friends complained that they knew nothing about the clans and sub-castes of Kashmîr, I believe that most Kashmîrî students share this quest. They are curious to know about their own origins and, more important, that of their friends. However, they don't know where to ask. The best place to do so is the two-volume, 1,200-page *Târîkh Aqwâm e Kashmîr* by Muhammad-ud-Deen 'Fauq' (Lahore, 1934).

The next best is the summary of family names and clans drawn up below<sup>1</sup>. Adfer and Mehreen wanted to be able to tell a person's origins by his surname. When I was talking to them, a Palestinian married to a Kashmîrî lady got interested in our conversation. He wanted to know about his wife's community. This chapter might serve at least the limited purpose that Adfer, Mehreen and the Palestinian had in mind.

Many Kashmîrî names are so evocative that they contain their own history. Nicknames (many of them offensive) and professional names that have become surnames fall into this category. Other names (like Dâr with a soft d) are so obscure that one can only guess about their origins.

### **Rich Mosaic**

What we need to remember is that though the population of the Valley is very small (around 55 lakh/ 5.5 million in 2004), Kashmîrî Muslim society is a very rich mosaic of ethnic groups. I once met a young Ghilzaî (who is from an Afghân clan) in Srinagar. There is a single Vadéhrâ (Siñdhî) family, which has been in the Valley since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are around a thousand Tibetan Muslims, too.

<sup>1</sup> This is a summary of the work done by Fauq, Lawrence and Kashmîr's old historians, together with my own field and academic work.



The blue-eyed Pushtûns of Gutli Bâgh are, of course, in a class of their own. Because of militancy there was resistance to organising tourism festivals in Kashmir<sup>2</sup>. So, members of this brave, straightforward community went all the way to Jammû, with their rare pedigreed horses, and stunned everyone there with the wealth of their culture.

In Kashmir there is a substantial Dard community, some Ladâkhi Muslims in the Sonamarg area and Srinagar, around a thousand Baltis, a small clan of Effendis, a very big Turkish community and all of thirty people of the Lahanda (Pothwari) group.

Kashmîrî society is incomplete without Hazratbal, and that venerable shrine without the much-respected Bâñdés. This handsome, pink-skinned clan from Central Asia is, today, as much a part of Kashmîrî society as the Syeds, who are of Arab origin.

But then who is an indigenous Kashmîrî? Or for that matter an aboriginal Indian? We say that foreigners started ruling Kashmir in 1586. But what about the two dynasties before the Mughals, namely the Shâhmîrîs and the Chaks? At least the Chaks had been in the Valley for two or three centuries before they ascended the throne. In the case of the Shâhmîrîs they weren't even native born. They became kings in less than three decades of migrating to the Valley. Similarly, the White Huns were probably from a foreign land, too.

The tiny Kashmîrî Pandit community has so many sub-groups that I suspect that some clans consist of just two or three households each. And they are not the only Hiñdûs, or even Brâhmîns, that there are in the Valley. There is a small Dogrâ Râjpûṭ community in the villages, and a major clan of Bhaderwâhî Râjpûṭs in Srinagar city. There are Punjâbî Hiñdûs not just in Srinagar, but also in the villages of Urî. They did not flee the Valley in the 1990s because their area remained uniquely peaceful.

A smart teenager in a designer skirt and black stockings came to my office in Jammû in 1990 and asked me where Christians from the Valley should register as migrants. She mentioned that she was related to one of India's best known fashion designers, who is a Punjâbî Hiñdû. I cross-checked her information. I learnt that the couturier's uncle had, indeed, converted to Christianity. As had several Kashmîrî Pandits who were employed by one of Srinagar's elite Anglican schools.

2 Till, in 2002, I decided to hold a festival anyway, without spending a single rupee of state government funds. I did it with the help of hotel, houseboat and shikârâ owners. They chipped in, despite the fierce opposition of a few newspapers, and despite a small section of the tourism industry boycotting the festival. The spring festival has, since, become an institution.



Kashmîr used to have a small Jewish community. They ran the town's most respected nursing home. I am permanently linked to it because I was born there, and was delivered by Dr. Gabbé. (At the time my father was posted in Srinagar.) The Jewish community of Kashmîr came to an end with her.

In this chapter I have mostly used phonetic spellings, rather than the way that the names are actually spelt. I have cited from old censuses because after a while the Census of India stopped listing people by their caste.

Kashmîr has so many clans and sub-castes that I have been able to list only a few, the more populous ones. (There is a separate chapter about 'Sikhism in Kashmîr'.)

Many surnames are common to the Muslims and the Hiñdûs. Many Muslims have retained their pre-Islâmic surnames, while some Hiñdûs have taken on Afghân, Persian and even Arabic surnames.

## The Muslims

### *Caste and social stratification*

Caste exists with religious sanction only among the Hiñdûs and Sikhs, Buddhists (from Ladâkh to Japan and Korea) and Zoroastrians<sup>3</sup>. Islâm (like pristine Sikhism and Buddhism) is egalitarian. And yet, as Imtiaz Ahmed and his team demonstrated, some social stratification and caste-like features exist even in Muslim societies, not just in the Indian sub-continent but also outside it.

Ahmed and his colleagues, most of them being eminent Muslim sociologists, had published their findings in a groundbreaking classic of the late 1960s called *Caste and social stratification among Muslims in India*, a book whose broad conclusions (and title) I am quoting from memory.

The first thing that they noticed about Indian Muslim society was that it was divided into two broad categories: the Ashrâf (Muslims who had come from West and Central Asia) and the Ajlâf (local converts). The former ranked much higher than the latter. Converts from the Râjpût caste of Hiñdûs were somehow sought to be accommodated in the first category, but weren't always accepted as Ashrâfs.

The Ahmed-led study was really meant for the plains of India, Bâñglâ Dêsh and Pâkistân. Of relevance to my Kashmîrî friends seeking their roots is the hierarchy within the Ashrâf category. All the researchers observed that the Syeds sat at the very top, followed by the Sheikhs, Mughals and Pathâns (the correct word is 'Pushtûns'), in that order. As I said, in some parts of India, Muslim Râjpûts managed to migrate from the top of the Ajlâf category to the bottom of the Ashrâf group. (In Urdû the word *shurfâ* is used for Ashrâfs.)

<sup>3</sup> And, yes, there used to be a very elite Pestonjee family in Srinagar.



Syeds, Mughals and Pathâns have been explained below. What really needs explaining is the second 'caste,' namely Sheikh. If the Syeds are exalted because they are the descendants of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the Sheikhs rank second because they are mostly the descendants of the Four Righteous Caliphs and are also of Arab origin.

The Sheikhs are Siddiquîs (descended from Hazrat Abû Bâqar Siddiq), Farûqîs (descended from Hazrat Omar Farûq), (the descendants of Hazrat Usmân Ghanî) Usmânîs, some Ghanîs and Umavîs and Alvis (the non-Syed descendants of Hazrat Ali Murtazâ). And then there are the two great Arab clans closest to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh): the Ansârîs and the Qurêshîs.

Now the bulk of Muslims everywhere consist of converts from the original people of that land. The new converts normally take on the title 'Sheikh.' What's more, they often adopt the name of an Arab tribe, normally the one of their spiritual master.

The best examples of this are some thitherto-underprivileged Hiñdû castes that took on Arab clan-names upon their conversion to Islâm. The weavers of much of the Indian sub-continent all became Ansârîs, the butchers all became Qurêshîs and the barbers all became Salmânîs.

Traditionally, a north Indian or Pâkistânî Qurêshî of Arab origin would not marry into a family of butcher Qurêshîs, or even treat them as social equals. The same is true of the other Arab Sheikhs in relation to their local namesakes.

In the context of Kashmir, Imtiaz Ahmed's main thesis doesn't quite apply because Islâm came here almost entirely through preaching-led conversion, very little through inward migration and not at all through conquest. In the rest of the sub-continent there was a substantial inward migration of the Syeds and Sheikhs from West Asia, of Mughals from Central Asia, of Arab traders to Kerala, Bombay and Lakshadweep and of Pathâns from Afghânistân and the frontier. Therefore, the (Arab) Sheikhs are the Muslim elite of North India, Hyderabad, Bombay and Pâkistân.

In Kashmir the number of (Arab) Sheikhs, Mughals and Pathâns is insignificant. The Syeds are as respected in Kashmir as they are throughout the world of Islâm. After them I have listed the Afghâns, the Mughals, the Râjpûts and the (locally converted) Sheikhs. Fauq used this order. It corresponds roughly to the order accepted all over the Indian sub-continent, as observed by Imtiaz Ahmed and his team, writing three decades after Fauq. (Within each category I have used the alphabetical order.)

In Kashmir one does not hear the words Ashrâf and Ajlâf, except among some academics. And yet there is a tacit division. On the one hand are the Syeds, the Afghâns, the Mughals and converts from the Hiñdû upper-castes (the Muslim Râjpûts and the Sheikhs).



On the other hand are converts from the former Hiñdû underclass. Fauq called them the 'adnâ aqwâm' (lower castes). Perhaps we can call them the 'underprivileged sections of society.' I have used the more cumbersome but also more PC (politically correct) expression 'Castes associated with culture and specialised professions.'

### Ashrafisation

One of the sidelights of Ahmed's thesis is the expression 'Ashrafisation.' It is obviously the Muslim equivalent of legendary sociologist M.N. Srinivas' 'Saṅskritisation.' Both are phenomena in which the subaltern castes take on the ways of the so-called upper castes.

Writing more than half a century before even Srinivas, Lawrence noted, 'Of late years the Dûms<sup>4</sup> of Kashmîr have steadily assumed the [clan-name] of Ganai, much to the annoyance of the original Ganais. To make matters worse, the gardeners and butchers have also taken a fancy to the [clan-name] Ganai. The boatmen of Kashmîr have settled on the name Dâr as a patent of respectability, and Musalmâns of the other [clans] are now annoying the Ganais and Dârs by asserting that they were originally Dûms and boatmen. Some [clan-names] are, however, restricted to men of lowly pursuits, and the [clan-name] Sufî, which is said by some to be of Brâhman origin is chiefly found among market-gardeners, bakers, and servants. Pâl is another such [clan-name]. The barbers of the valley do not aim so high as the butchers and boatmen, and have contented themselves with appropriating the [clan-name] of Thakur; but there is nothing to prevent Abdulla, the Dûm, from calling himself Abdulla Pañdit.'

Similarly, a clan of fake Syeds is the so-called Syed Makar tribe.

The most important things to note in the context of Kashmîr are: (a) The Mughals of Kashmîr came here as migrants and men of religion, for which they are greatly respected. They did not come as rulers. Therefore, they do not have the same privileged status here as in North India and Pâkistân. (b) The Afghâns ruled over Kashmîr too briefly, and far too much by remote control, to have left behind a Pushtûn ruling elite of the kind that existed in the rest of the sub-continent. (c) Muslim society in Kashmîr is more homogenous, more egalitarian and less stratified than in the rest of the sub-continent. No one bothers much about how fancy your pedigree-table (family-tree) is. Only your present status matters. d) Above all, the Sheikhs of Kashmîr are mostly converts from the local castes. Very few of them are the direct descendants of the Four Righteous Caliphs.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence said that the Dûms were of *shûdr* origin.



### The Syeds

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had only one surviving child, Hazrat Fâtimâ. She married Hazrat Ali, who was the fourth Righteous Caliph of Islâm. All Syeds are the descendants of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), through his daughter Hazrat Fâtimâ and Hazrat Ali.

Bulbul Shâh is the first known Syed to have come to Kashmir. This was a few years before A.D. 1320. Given below is a partial list of some Syed surnames, with a few words about the founders of these clans.

Sometimes non-Syeds adopt Syed names. Some Syed names are also the names of sûfî orders founded by a Syed of that name. Members of such orders adopt the name of their order as their own surname. So there is no guarantee that the Hamadânî, Naqshbandî or Qâdirî next door is a Syed. I know at least one Kashmirî Pandit called Jalâlî.

**Andrâbî** Imâm Hussain was the beloved grandson of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Syed Muslim was his descendant in the fourteenth generation. The Syed migrated from Hejâz to Andrâb (in Afghânistân). His clan lived in Andrâb for nine generations. In the tenth generation came Syed Ahmed Andrâbî, who migrated to Kashmir with Syed Ali Hamadânî.

**Mantaqî-Baihaqî** Syed Hussain Mantaqî founded this clan. He migrated from a town called Baihaq (Khurâsân) to Kashmir during the reign of Emperor Budshâh @ Zain-ul-Abidin (the 15<sup>th</sup> century). The clan is known as Mantaqî because they were experts in the science of *mantaq* (logic).

**Bukhârî** Syed Jalâl-ud-Dîn Bukhârî was a renowned saint. His fame spread from Bukhârâ (Uzbékistân) to all parts of India. His descendants are called the Bukhârîs. The first of his clan to come to Kashmir was Syed Alâuddîn Bukhârî. This was during the reign of Sulân Sikander (1389-1413). The 1911 census revealed that there were 9,237 Bukhârî Syeds in the state.

**Dâhbîdî** This clan is descended from Makhdûm Âzam Syed Ahmed 'of Kâshân' (actually he was from Khurâsân). Even among the Syeds of Kashmir, few are aware that a branch of this tiny clan exists in Kashmir. It once occupied a very high status. However, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were confined to performing religious rituals. They were relegated to the darning and bookbinding professions. Some of them have traditionally lived in the Lâl Bâzâr and Naushehrâ neighbourhoods of Srinagar.



- Davârkî** This line comes from an Irâqî town called Davârak, which is near Baghdâd. Allâmâ Mîr Syed travelled from there to Hérât. After a brief stay in Hérât he migrated to Kashmîr during the reign of Emperor Budshâh @ Zain-ul-Abedin (the 15<sup>th</sup> century).
- Gilânî** See 'Qâdirî' below.
- Hamadânî** Hazrat Amîr Kabîr Syed Ali Hamadânî came to Kashmîr in AH 781 (late 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). The Hamadânî Syeds are from his line.
- Jalâlî** Syed Hussain Sabzwârî, son of Syed Ali, founded this clan. Their order can be traced back to Imâm (not king) Zain-ul-Abedin. The tomb of Syed Hussain Sabzwârî is in Gupkâr village, by the banks of what used to be the Gagribal lake (Srinagar).
- Naqshbañdî** There are two Naqshbañdî clans in Kashmîr. Their founders were: i) Hazrat Khwâjâ Khâvind Mehmûd Naqshbañdî Attârî, who came to Kashmîr in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D., and ii) Hazrat Khwâjâ Syed Abdur Rahîm Naqshbañdî, whose ancestral kingdom was Tashkent (Uzbékistân) and who migrated to Kashmîr in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Both were descended from a line of Bukhârî Syeds.
- Qâdirî** Shâh Abul Hassan and Shâh Muhammad Fâzil Qâdirî were brothers. They were related to one of the greatest saints of Islâm, Hazrat Ghaus Âzam Sheikh Abdul Qâdir Jilânî. They came to Kashmîr, through Peshâwar, in A.H. 1090 (17<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) with a large group of followers. They founded one of three Qâdirî lines in Kashmîr. The three lines are based in Khânyâr, Rétaing and Nowgâm Shâhâbâd respectively. All Qâdirîs are not Syeds. However, all Qâdirî-Gilânîs are. (G and j are interchangeable when we switch between Arabic and Persian-Urdû. Thus, Gilânî and Jilânî are the same.)
- Rufâî** Syed Muhammad of Isfahân was an eminent saint. He was popularly known as 'Rufâî.' He migrated to Kashmîr during the reign of Emperor Budshâh @ Zain-ul-Abedin (the 15<sup>th</sup> century). He first lived in Srinagar. However, he soon found that the city was not quiet enough for his meditations. So he migrated to Bârâmullâ.
- Rizvî** Syed Hussain Rizvî, a saint, migrated from Qom (Irân) to Kashmîr in the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Budshâh @ Zain-ul-Abedin was the emperor of Kashmîr at the time. He had got a splendid garden created for himself at Zainagîr (Sopore). He



gifted it to the saint. The word Rizvî is derived from the name of Hazrat Imâm Ali-ar-Razâ, the founder of the clan.

**Yasvî Alvî** All Alvîs are the descendants of Hazrat Ali, from wives other than Hazrat Fâtimâ. Therefore, they are not Syeds as such. However, the Yasvî Alvîs are Syeds. They come from the line of Hazrat Sultân Khwâjâ Ahmed Yasvî through Imâm Muhammad bin Al Hanafî. Ultimately, like all Syeds, their family tree goes back to Hazrat Ali. The name 'Yasvî' is derived from Yas or Yasû, which is a town in Turkestân. Khwâjâ Ahmed Yasvî Naqshbañdî belonged to this town. He migrated to Kashmîr in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### The Qurêshîs

The Qurêshîs are descendants of the exalted Qurêsh tribe of Arabia, which was founded by Nazar-bin Kanânâ. Some of the greatest names in Islâm, including Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself, are from this tribe. The Syeds and the Qurêshîs are thus of the same stock and a similar ancestry. Like the Syeds, the Qurêshîs came to Kashmîr from west and central Asia.

The first of this clan to come to Kashmîr was Syed Muhammad Qurêshî. He was thus both a Syed and a Qurêshî. He migrated to Kashmîr in the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. as a member of the entourage of Hazrat Amîr Kabîr Syed Ali Hamadânî.

### The Afghâns

During the Afghân period not only Kashmîrî Muslims but also Kashmîrî Pafidits were appointed to senior government positions in Kâbul. Many of the Muslims stayed on, never to return to Kashmîr. During the same period a substantial Kashmîrî Muslim diaspora formed in what is now called the North West Frontier Province of Pâkistân. Fauq writes that in the early part of the twentieth century almost a half of the Muslims of Pêshâwar proper were of Kashmîrî origin. However, he added that the ethnic Kashmîris had given up their customs and blended so well with the 'Pathâns' (Pushtûns) that they have begun to look like good 'Pathâns'.

Similarly, those who migrated to Kashmîr from Afghânistân or the NWFP have given up their language and customs to blend with the Kashmîris. One of the few exceptions is the Pushtûn tribe of Gutlî Bâgh (Gânderbal). They still speak Pushto at home.

Lawrence adds, 'The most interesting colony is that of Kuki Khayl Afridis of Dranghahâma, who retain all the old Pathân customs, and still for the most part speak Pashtu... Another colony of Pathâns is that of the Machipurias but by intermarriage with Kashmîrî women the Machipurias have lost most of the characteristics of the Pathân... The Machipuria Pathâns belong to the Yusufzaî section...



'Pathâns came to Kashmîr in the Durrani time [generally called the Afghân era], but many were introduced by the Mahârâjâ Gulâb Singh, who granted them jâgîrs [estates] for service on the frontier. In Bhîru [Beeru, Beerwâ?] many villages are held by Swâtis and Bonairwâls.'

The surname Khân indicates nothing. In Kashmîr many Khâns are of purely local origin. It was a military title. The Khâns of Kargil are mostly indigenous Kargilis, who had this title even before they converted to Islâm. Genghis is the world's best known Khân. And yet he was neither a Pushtûn/Pathân, nor even a Muslim. (He was an animist.) All the Turks of the hills of Bâramullâ call themselves Khân.

In 1911, there were 52,263 Pushtoons in the state. Of these, 30,338 claimed to be Khâns. Several Muslim Râjpûts of Mîrpur told the census authorities that they were Pushtûns. The proportion of Pushtûns in post-1947 Jammû and Kashmîr might not be the same. Almost the entire Pushtûn elite of Srinagar migrated to Pâkistân after the partition of India.

The Afghân clans of Kashmîr are:

Kukî Khél

Kant

Khatkî

Khyberî

Niâzî

Sado-zaî

Yûsufzaî

*Dispute:* Fauq classifies the Khâñd or Khâñdé clan among the Afghâns. Lawrence puts them among 'Brâhmin farmers.' The balance of evidence indicates conversion from a native clan,

### Mughals

Sir Walter Lawrence mentions only five Mughal clans: the Mîrs, the Bég-Mîrzâs, the Bâñdés, the Bachhs and the Ashâis. Urdu-Persian histories mention others as well.

#### Ashâi

This clan migrated to Kashmîr from a village called Aishâwar (Khurâsâñ). Their actual title was Aishâwarî. However, over the years it seems to have got shortened to Ashâi. An old history of Kashmîr, the *Rozatul Abrâr*, calls them 'an eminent bloodline.' The first of the clan to come to Kashmîr was Khwâjâ Sangin Shâh of Hamadân. He accompanied Hazrat Amîr Kabîr Syed Alî Hamadânî to Kashmîr in the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The Khwâjâ and his sons were shopkeepers and manufacturers.



They would divide their various duties in a very disciplined manner. From *ishrâq* (the voluntary *namâz* offered well after sunrise) to *peshin* (or *zuhr*, the obligatory prayer offered after it is noon) they would be available in their shop to attend to customers. Then they would leave for the workshop where their goods were made. They would stay in the workshop till *asr* (the obligatory *namâz* offered between *zuhr* and sunset/ *maghrib*). They would offer their *asr* prayers at a mosque and would stay in the mosque till it was time for *ishâ* (the obligatory *namâz* offered after it is night).

There is a theory that the clan got the name Ashâi because its members would emerge from the mosque only after the *ishâ* prayers.

The elder who brought the *moo é muqaddas* (see the chapter on 'Hazratbal') to Kashmîr was an Aishâwarî. If we accept the first theory about the Ashâis, then Khwâjâ Nûr-ud-Dîn would have been from this clan.

#### **Bachh/ Buchh**

A very elite Mughal bloodline is that of Genghiz Khân. This clan is called Chañgézî in much of Asia. Mîr Muhammad Ali @ Mîr Ali Bukhârî, an eminent religious scholar who belonged to this clan, came to Kashmîr during the regime of Emperor Budshâh. His descendants included the illustrious Mîr Nâzuk Niâzî Qâdirî and the martyr Qâzî Mîr Mûsâ. The emperor granted him an estate. The maulânâ served the people of Kashmîr sincerely and well. His descendant Qâzî Mîr Ibrâhim, son of Qâzî Sikañder, was the first of the clan to use the name Buchh. Bachh and Buchh are said to be Kashmîrî words that correspond to the Sañskrit 'vats' (father).

The Buchhs are a branch of the Mîr clan.

#### **Bândé**

The 1911 census document mentions that this clan had been put in jail for being headstrong and outspoken. What? The entire community? And by whom? When? Was this in Kashmîr? The census doesn't say. And no other history even hints at this.

Another history tells us that during the era of the Shâhs (presumably, Kashmîr's own sultâns), some 'Chughts' [i.e. Mughals of the great Chughtaî clan] came over from Turkestan to Kashmîr. They were given an estate in what is now called Bâñdîpur.

This is a very tiny clan. And yet they have produced a number of eminent men who find mention in almost all Urdû-Persian histories.



We all know that when Budshâh was still a prince, he 'accompanied' Amîr Tîmûr (Taimûr) to Samarqand (Uzbékistân). 'Forced to accompany' would be more accurate. 'Taken hostage' comes closest. In any case, Tîmur placed the young prince in the care of one Khwâjâ Badiullâh (or Badiuddîn). The Khwâjâ was a native of Turkestân, but had become a part of the Lahore aristocracy. Young Budshâh stayed with the Khwâjâ for a very long time. Most historians say that he was allowed to return to Srinagar only when Tîmûr died. Others record that when Tîmûr left India, the prince went back to Srinagar.

Either way, the Khwâjâ escorted the prince back to Srinagar. Sikander But Shikan was the King of Kashmîr at the time. He organised celebrations on his son's return. He also gave the Khwâjâ an estate in Kashmîr. Fauq says that the Kashmîris are 'experts at distorting words, giving them weird shapes and rendering them meaningless.' (True, but don't all Indians do this? Don't the people of Lucknow change the name of their city to 'Nakhlau,' don't Jammûites interchange syllable, don't the Punjâbis of Pâkistân change my name to 'Péji'?) Well, the people of Kashmîr did distort the name of this particular elder to 'Bâñdî bâbâ' and 'Bâñdé bâbâ.' The name stuck to his descendants.

There is a magnificent Bâñdé lane in Bâñdimar. The ruins of its mansions speak of the splendour that once was.

**Bég(h),  
Mîrzâ**

It is a Turkestânî tradition that army officers who display exemplary bravery on the battlefield are given the title 'Bég.' The word means 'leader' or 'chief.' Variants of the title include Bak (pron. buck), Bag (pron. bug) and Bey (or Bay). In Turkey, too, the titles Bay and Bak were given to senior army officers. Some Bays and Bégs went on to acquire the highest title of the land, Pâshâ. The best known example is that of Gâzi Anwar Pâshâ.

In 1911, there were 280 Bégs and Mîrzâs in Jammû, 6,595 in Kashmîr and 30 in the frontier areas. The two main Bég clans of the state are based in Srinagar and Ânañnâg.

**Gâñî**

The first Mughal to come to Kashmîr as a conqueror was Mîrzâ Haidar Dughlat Gurgân(i). There can be no doubt about the Mughalness of the Gurgânîs. (I say this because Lawrence left them out.) There is a note in a Persian history that reads, 'The Gurgânîs are famous [i.e. better known] as



the Gânīs.' Historian Hassan, too, feels that these are two names of the same clan. The Gânīs live in Kashmir and the Punjāb. Some came to Kashmir as men of learning. Mīrzā Haidar Dughlat also left behind a few soldiers and administrators.

### Jân

(See 'Mīr' below for events leading to the migration of some of that family to Khoihāmā.) The martyrdom of Qāzī Mīr Mūsā generated enormous sympathy for the family, which began to flee Srinagar for the villages. Some even fled to the Punjāb. 'Jân' is a Kashmirī word that means 'the nice' or even 'the beloved.' The branch that fled to Khoihāmā was affectionately called Jân because everyone liked them for their own good nature and out of sympathy for Mūsā.

### Mīr

If the name Mīr is used at the beginning of a person's name (e.g. Mīr Jāved Shāh), it is a title, especially of people of the Syed and Shāh clans. To find out what that person's caste is, look at his last name. On the other hand, if Mīr is used as a last name (e.g. Jamshed Mīr), it indicates that the person is a Mīrzā. This is true of Kashmir and the Punjāb. In other parts of India different conventions apply. For instance, in Hyderabad (South India), even genuine Tātārīs use Mīr as a title, before their given name.

Mīr is a Turkish word. It means 'officer' or 'chief.' There are schools of thought which say that Mīr is short for Amīr or Mīrzā. It is the people of Mughalīstān (Maghūlīstān) who made the use of this title widespread.

Mīr Ali Bukhārī migrated from Turkeṣtān-Mughalīstān to Kashmir during the reign of Emperor Budshāh (15<sup>th</sup> century). He had received this title well before his migration. *Rozatul Abrār*, a mediæval history, notes that 'God had given the Mīr a very ample number of children. God also gave him a lot of wealth.' As a result, the clan founded by Mīr Ali Bukhārī is quite numerous in Kashmir and the Punjāb. The Kashmirī Mīrs of the Punjāb are of this clan. In Kashmir they live in Srinagar city as well as in the villages.

The Mīr family used to intermarry frequently with the Syeds. For instance, Qāzī Muhammad Sāleh, son of the martyr Qāzī Mīr Mūsā, was married to a Syed.

Another reason why this clan is so widespread is that it prospered during the Mughal era in Kashmir. Qāzī Mīr Mūsā was a disciple of Sheikh Hamzā Makhdūm. The spiritual



heirs of Makhdûm Sâheb had invited the Mughals to take over the administration of Kashmîr (in the 1570s and '80s). One reason why some of them fled Srinagar (not only to the Punjâb, but also to rural areas within Kashmîr, notably Khoihâmâ) was because the then king of Kashmîr, the hot-headed Yâqoub Shâh, went after them hammer and tongs. Because they were not ethnic Kashmîris, many of the clan could consider fleeing all the way to the Punjâb and then settling there.

The fact that Sâleh was an ethnic Mughal must have helped him advance in the new power structure after 1589.

Till the 19<sup>th</sup> century the order in which this title was placed in a name helped tell a Syed from a Mughal, at least in Kashmîr and the Punjâb. Syeds used *Mîr* as a title. However, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century such distinctions began to get blurred. Even Mughals started using *Mîr* as a title, i.e. at the beginning of the name.

However, even to this day, in rural Kashmîr and the Punjâb genuine Mughals still use the word as a surname, at the end of the name.

Many *Mîrs* enjoyed temporal power and wealth till the end of the Dogrâ era. The palatial house of Khwâjâ Azîz *Mîr* in Râjpur, Pulwâmâ, for instance, is testimony to this. In Chhatergul, Budgâm, the Dogrâs' *zaildâr* (chief of a group of villages), too, was a *Mîr*.

In 1911, there were 1,210 *Mîrs* in Jammû, 16,008 in Kashmîr and 28 in the 'frontier' areas.

#### Rafîquî

This is a very well known clan. Their family-tree goes all the way back to Khwâjâ Sangîn Shâh (see 'Ashâi' above). Thus, the Rafîquîs are an offshoot of the Ashâi clan. This particular branch was founded by Khwâjâ Tâhir Rafîq Ashâi Suharwardî, who was a great-grandson of Khwâjâ Sangîn Shâh.

I have written about the Bambâs in a separate chapter. Some of them claim to be from Turkey. In that case they ought to be classified with the Mughals. However, the ancestry that I have mentioned in that chapter is based on very sound authority, including Fauq's. Lawrence adds, '(They) take wives from the Hatmâl and [Khakhâ] families of the country below [Bârânullâ]. They give daughters in marriage to [Syeds]. Batkot is the old home of the [Bambâs] in Kashmîr, and when they die they are brought back to the beautiful burying-ground, still kept up in Batkot. The heads of [Bambâ] families are addressed as Râjâ, and the tract in which they live is known as Rajwara.'



### R  jp  t Muslims

All historians, from Kalhan of *The R  j  tara  gin  * to Sir Walter Lawrence agree that in ancient times Kashmir was ruled by kings who were R  jp  ts. However, Fauq laments that the original *got(r)* of none of the present-day (Muslim) R  jp  t clans is known. He singles out the Bhatti clan of Kashmir and the Punj  b as being the exception. (*Got(r)s* are bloodlines; somewhat like sub-castes.)

While I respect Mr. Fauq's research enormously, the fact is that most Muslim R  jp  ts have retained their old surnames, if not *got(r)s*. Thus, the M  gr   clan was called M  gr  sh before its conversion. In olden days, according to some historians, the D  rs were called D  mars.<sup>5</sup> Till a few centuries ago they were called D  ngars. The N  iks have retained their Hi  nd   name, as have the P  ls, Gakkhars and R  thors.

There's an interesting twist to this. It might solve the problem of the lost-to-memory *got(r)s* of the R  jp  ts of Kashmir. Fauq quotes a book called *R  jp  t Gote  n* ('The bloodlines of R  jp  t clans') which makes a sweeping statement. It says, 'Evidence of R  jp  t governments has been traced right up to Kashmir. Because R  jp  ts ruled over Kashmir for a very long time therefore we believe that most of these R  jp  t clans were Bhatt  s.' Great logic. Makes life so simple for us self-style anthropologists.

The first modern census of the (united) state of Jamm   and Kashmir took place in 1851. It listed the following as being the best-known farming communities (read: rural chiefs and landlords) of Kashmir: Pa  ndit, Sof  , Butt, Ittoo, T    tr  , Kh    nd  , Gan  i, Rain  , D  r (hard d), R    ther and Rish  i.

Now all eleven clans were classified in the said census as [Muslim] 'Br  hmin farmers'. This could be due to ignorance about caste on the part of the (mainly British) compilers of the census. Or, perhaps, several centuries after they had converted to Isl  m it was difficult to say who was what before conversion. At least in theory the caste system has allotted the work of farming to the Kshatriya (R  jp  t) caste. However, over the centuries some major 'martial' clans of soldier-farmers emerged among the Br  hmins as well.

By 1891, the census authorities seemed to realise that they might have erred about many of the aforementioned communities. That the Pa  ndits and Butts were 'Br  hmin farmers' is beyond doubt. The structure of the name Ittoo (or Yittoo), too, might suggest a Br  hmin origin. The Rish  is might also have been Br  hmins before they accepted Isl  m.

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence writes, 'The D  mars are said to be descendants of Sudras, the lowest of the four Hi  nd   castes.'



Incidentally, as my senior Mr. Mehmood ur Rehman pointed out, in Kashmîr if a person is called 'Pañdit' he will invariably, without exception, be a Muslim (ditto if he is called Butt; Hiñdûs use the spelling and pronunciation Bhat).

Lawrence classified the following (Muslim communities) as being of Kshatriya stock: Mâgré, Tâñtré, Dâr (hard d), Dâñgar, Rainâ, Râther, Thâkur, Nâik. Surprisingly he left out the Ganâis.

#### Bhattî

These are Chanderbansi Râjpûts. In the ninth generation after Lord Krishn there was a king called Râjâ Gaj. Fauq quotes a belief to the effect that this king founded the city of Ghaznî which, the story goes, was originally called Gajnî (get it? gaj-nî). He also cites a history that says that Râwalpiñdî was originally called Ganjîpurâ and was Gaj's capital. The Bhattis are Gaj's descendats.

Cunningham, the 19<sup>th</sup> century British army general cum historian, was of the opinion that the Bhattis ruled over Kohistân Namak and Kashmîr from their capital at Ganjîpurâ, Râwalpiñdî. They ruled over Kashmîr till A.D. 1239, he adds. (This mystifies me. I am not aware of any Râwalpiñdî-based ruler controlling Kashmîr during that era. It is possible, though, that the Râwalpiñdî-based ruler was a general overlord to whom Kashmîr owed allegiance. Kashmîr's own histories make no mention of this.)

#### Dâr (with a hard d)

There is unanimity among all scholars that the Dârs are of Kshatriya stock. They were great warriors in ancient times, and were the overlords of a major portion of the Valley. They are mentioned in *The Râjâtarañginî*, which refers to Koshthak, a famous Dâr of the Lehar (Lâr) area. He died on the battlefield. His wife was so distressed that she sat on his funeral pyre and committed sati. She did this, as Fauq points out, to keep her Râjpût-glory intact. Sati, as we know, was never widespread. It was always an upper-caste, and within those castes an elite, phenomenon.

#### Dâr (with a soft d)

Little is known about the origins of this community. Dâr (with a soft d) is certainly not a variant of the better known Dâr (with a hard d). According to one theory, Dâr (with a soft d) is actually a suffix, -dâr (the keeper, lord or owner of), as in Tehsîldâr (the chief of a sub-district) and Thânedâr (the head of the police station). Since this is a Persian suffix, it would seem that this community had held important positions in the power structure during mediæval times.



**Kakr(h)û**

The Gakhrû, Gakkhar(h), Khokhar and Âwân clans are inter-related. Some believe that these are all of Arab or Persian origin. Others classify them as Râjpûts. Old records show that at least the Gakkhar(h)s were Hiñdûs, and Râjpûts at that, when Mehmûd of Ghaznî came a-calling. This was in the tenth century A.D. Ferishtâ specifies that they were 'infidels' at the time.

The Gakkhar(h)s joined the Râjpût alliance against Mehmûd. At Peshâwar the Gakkhar(h)s and some other Râjpûts martyred between three and four thousand Muslims.

Throughout the history of the Valley, the Gakkhar(h)s crop up from time to time as a clan of fierce warriors.

**Khatân**

Mahârâjâ Gulâb Singh always depended very heavily on this brave clan of warriors, of whom he was extremely fond. In turn, the Khatâns always stood by their king during every crisis and whenever sensitive operations had to be carried out. The Chib Râjpûts of Mîrpur (Jammû) were the clan best represented in the forces that had the Mahârâjâ's confidence. The Khatâns are a branch of this clan.

When Zorâwar Singh led the Punjâb-Dogrâ army into Ladâkh to annex it in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this clan was in the forefront. While the Punjâb-Dogrâ army won the war, the Khatâns lost a lot of their men, especially when they entered western Tibet. The Khatân clan was almost wiped out in that war. All male adults of this clan, except a youth who had not yet joined the army, were martyred. The Mahârâjâ summoned this young man, Shér Alî, and appointed him the head of the department that looked after the army's horses.

The Mahârâjâ took Shér Alî under his wings. When the Mahârâjâ went to Kashmîr he took Shér Alî along. Shér Alî fell in love with Kashmîr. He told the Mahârâjâ that he wanted to settle in the Valley. So the Mahârâjâ granted him an estate of 400 acres in Nâgâm (Budgâm).

**Lone**

Lawrence classified the Lones (the e is silent) in the Vysya (business) caste. The clan believes that it migrated from Chillâs to Kashmîr. Neither claim is backed by evidence.

The clan, as Stein pointed out, has always been involved in the political power structure of its area, and sometimes of all of Kashmîr. It is first mentioned in *The Râjâtarañginî* as the Loniâ clan, during the reign of King Harsh (A.D. 1101). Stein wrote that the Lones seemed to be a very important part of



**Mâgré** the rural population of Kashmîr. All evidence indicates that they were a land-owning and farming community. The Vysyas, on the other hand, used to stick to shopkeeping and trade. The Mâgrés are a very old, pre-Islâmic ruling clan. There are countless references to them in the chapter 'A History of Kashmîr.' The name derives from Mâgrêsh. In 1931, there were 7,668 Mâgrés in the state. They are also found in Jammû province and in the Punjâb.

**Nâik** The name of this clan derives from the Saṅskrit word for 'leader' or 'chief.' (Fauq says that it means 'the wise one' or 'thinker' in Saṅskrit. It is, therefore, the Kashmîrî equivalent of mantaqî.) Some scholars have classified the Nâiks as Brâhmins. However, as Fauq argues, not everyone in the learned professions was a Brâhmin.

What is certain is that this is a community of rural chieftains. They pop up in the history of Kashmîr at regular intervals. And they have always been a force to reckon with.

During the short lived reign of Queen Sugaṇdh Râni (A.D. 921-923), the Nâiks teamed up with the Tāntrés to kick up such a violent storm that the queen had to abdicate.

Then in Budshâh's time they entered into a matrimonial alliance with the family of Pâṇḍû Chak of Trehgâm.

When the Mughal Emperor Akbar attacked Kashmîr the clan's response varied. The Nâiks first resisted the invaders. Then Ibrâhim Nâik and Shaṅgî Nâik sensed that the war was going in favour of the Mughals. Some time between 1586 and 1589 they switched over to the would-be victors. However, Qâsim Nâik stuck it out and valiantly resisted his eponymous enemy, Mirzâ Qâsim Mîr Behrî.

**Parré** Like the Lon(e)s and Shâlîs, the Parrés are a clan of soldiers and farmers. Along with the Lones, they were always considered good fighters. There were 15,497 Parrés in Kashmîr in 1931.

**Rainâ<sup>6</sup>** This is an illustrious clan of rulers. Their history has been given in some detail in the chapter 'A History of Kashmîr.' In 1931, there were 3,873 Muslim Raina Râjpûts in the state.

<sup>6</sup> This is a name that conveys nothing. A Rainâ can be a Brâhmin, a Râjpût or even a Dogrâ carpenter.



**Râther or  
Râthor**

In the various histories of Kashmir they are referred as Râther, Râthor and Râo-thor, etc. They are of the same stock as the Janjûâ clan. They are Yaduvanshî Râjpûts, of the dynasty of Lord Krishn. In 1931, there were 39,725 of this clan in the state.

**Shahmîrî**

This clan ruled over all of Kashmir, as sultâns, longer than any other 'indigenous' Muslim dynasty. However, it depends on what one means by indigenous. Even the Shahmîrîs had migrated to the Valley from the frontier region of Svâd Kanîr (Swât) in AD 1315, during the reign of King Singh Dev or Sambha Dev. The political history of Kashmir from A.D. 1320, till the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is really the history of this much-loved dynasty. (The correct pronunciation is both Shahmîrî and Shâhmîrî. Most authorities prefer the latter. Fauq has used both pronunciations, at different places.)

**Tântré**

Some scholars feel that the word has been derived from 'tâñtric' and that this clan lived off the earnings of magic and mystic talismans. I have my doubts. Warriors don't peddle amulets. But then the Kashmirî Pañdits accept the Tâñtrés as Brâhmîns. The 1891 census listed them as Brâhmîn farmers. They certainly are a soldier-farmer community. But were they Brâhmîns? Sir Walter Lawrence listed them among the Râjpûts. In ancient records they are called the Tantrin clan. There were 5,478 members of this clan according to that census. By 1931, the number had increased to 12,253.

**Thag**

The Thags claim to be Chanderbansî Râjpûts. Thag (or Thug) means highwayman (dacoit). However, the Thags have a better explanation. They say that their ancestor was a 15<sup>th</sup> century Râjpût from Chenaini (Udhampur, Jammû). He decided to go to Kashmir because he had heard so much about Emperor Budshâh's sense of justice.

On the way he met a Muslim ascetic who converted him to Islâm. Budshâh found him talented and appointed him to a high rank in his army. Presently, the Râjpût Muslim from Jammû married a Kashmirî woman.

One day the emperor told the officer, 'You can ask me for any favour.' The newly converted officer replied, 'All I want is enough land to spread my prayer mat on.'

Now a prayer mat hardly takes up less space than a bath-towel. The emperor was pleased by his officer's simplicity. But the Râjpût's wife was offended that her husband had let



such a good chance slip by. She told the emperor, 'My husband should have asked you to grant him enough to look after the needs of his children, himself and me.'

Budshâh remarked, 'This man has turned out to be quite a *thug*. He created a good impression on me by asking for nothing, but he got his wife to give me a long shopping list.'

In 1931, there were around 4,000 members of this clan. They are found in Bhaderwâh, Kishtwâr, Srînagar, Râjourî, Ânañtnâg and Pâdar. See also the section 'The Dard-Shîn People of Guréz' in the chapter 'The People of Kashmir.'

### Sheikhs

In most Muslim lands, new converts are called by the honorific Sheikh. However, in Kashmir certain former-Brâhmins still choose to be called 'Pañdit.' This is a group that once specialised in medicine and education. They retain their old caste-name in part because it is the only surname that they have, and in part, as Fauq implies, because of the prestige attached to it. However, as elsewhere, they are called Sheikhs (and Khwâjâs) as well.

In 1911, there were 3,326 Pañdit Muslims in the state. Their number had increased to 3,584 by 1931. The male: female ratio was 100:87. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century many Pañdit Muslims migrated to Amritsar, Siâlkot and Lahore.

**Âkhûn** Historian Hassan wrote that there were four kinds of Mullâs: i) The kind that lives off the earnings of mosques, acts as imâms and educates male children. Such people are called 'Âkhûn,' which is the Persian word for teacher. This category includes clans called Maulvî, Qâzî, Mallâ, Mullâ, Muftî and Âkhûn. ii) Gorkan. iii) Ghusâl: This is the Persian word for those who wash and cleanse corpses before burial. iv) Farmers.

**Bâbâ** Like 'Shâh' this is not the name of a clan or tribe. Instead Bâbâ and Shâh are honorifics by which the community around them used to address likeable and respectable families. Bâbâ is also a title associated with the Syeds and other saints.

**Butt/ Bhat** This is a surname shared by Hîndûs and Muslims alike. The Butts are almost certainly of Brâhmin origin.

**Drâbû** Drabîyâr is a neighbourhood in Srînagar. According to one theory, people of this area who have migrated to other neighbourhoods or villages are known as Drâbûs. A more likely theory traces their origin to the Drabagâm village of Budgâm. They were called Drâbû when they migrated to Srînagar. The place where they built their houses came to be called Drabîyâr, and not the other way around.



**Ganāl**

Most Ganāls trace their ancestry to local Rājputs. This is a very old clan, certainly older than the reign of Emperor Budshāh. They were active members of Budshāh's nobility, and also close associates of Sheikh Nūr-ud-Dīn. In Kashmirī folklore they have a reputation for wisdom.

**Ishberī**

Ishber (or Īshā-ber) is a now-affluent neighbourhood near the Nishāt Garden and close to the Dal Lake. In the *Rājatarānginī* it is mentioned as the place where a Jesus- (Īshā-) like saint was crucified, buried in a vault and resurrected. The village is also a major pilgrimage of the Hiñdūs. The original inhabitants of the village were known as the Ishberīs when they migrated to the city. Many of them were Brāhmins.

**Kaul**

Historian Hassan wrote that the Kauls were the highest ranking Brāhmins. After conversion to Islām, too, the clan produced several eminent men.

**Kut Rāj**

It is said that the ancestors of this clan used to be the rulers of Multān. They migrated to Kashmir when they were dethroned in Multān and needed employment. They captured the present Budgām area during one of Kashmir's numerous civil wars.

**Makhdūmī**

There are three kinds of Makhdūmī clans in Kashmir. i) The descendants of Bābā Ali Rainā, who was the brother of the enormously respected 16<sup>th</sup> century saint, Makhdūm Sāheb. ii) Those who have been managing the legacy of Makhdūm Sāheb during the last five centuries. iii) The residents of the Kalāshpurā neighbourhood.

**Malik**

This is a title of Central Asian origin, conferred by the Sultāns of Kashmir on their nobility (courtiers, rural chieftains and senior civil and military officers). It is not the name of a caste-group or clan. The rulers of Kashmir also gave this title to the guardians of the highways to central India and Turkeṣtān. Fauq says that all Maliks were Hiñdūs before their conversion.

**Mallā**

See 'Ākhūn.'

**Māntjū or  
Māntjī**

This is one of Kashmir's pre-eminent clans in terms of learning and the 'knowledge of developments in the world of religious and secular scholarship.'

**Mattū (with  
soft t's)**

Khwājā Dāūd, a Kashmirī, was an expert in 'the science of all things that are manifest.' However, he did not know how to get into a spiritual trance. He once went to meet the



legendary saint, Khwâjâ Habibullâh Naushehrî. The saint cast a glance at Dâud and rendered him unconscious. Ever since that day he learnt the art of spiritual ecstasy. *Mattû* is a Kashmîrî word that roughly means 'he who is possessed' or 'the entranced one.' Ever since, the descendants of Khwâjâ Dâud have been known as the *Mattûs*. (Incidentally, it is because of a Persian verse written by Khwâjâ Habibullâh Naushehrî, a mediæval saint, that we know that a 'prophet' and a 'king' [the king of kings?] is buried in Rozâbal.)

**Mullâ** See 'Âkhûn.'

**Pañdit** See the first two paragraphs of this section.

**Pîrzâdâ** This is not the name of a clan or sub-caste. Each important disciple of a Syed *pîrs* (hereditary saints) was called a *Pîrzâdâ* (lit.: 'the son of a pîr') or even simply 'Pîr.' Even *pîrs* who are not Syeds are known as *pîrs* if they have a significant number of disciples, a following.

**Putlû** The name is derived from the Kashmîrî-Urdû word 'putlâ,' which means 'idol.' This community retained its pre-Islâmic name even after conversion to a faith that opposes idol worship. When they were Hîndûs they either made and sold idols, or were keepers of idols at temples.

**Qâsmî** In Srînagar, there once was a saint called Hazrat Sheikh Muhammad. Sheikh Qâsim Bahâî was his grandson. Qâsim's descendants are now known as the Qâsmî *Pîrzâdâs*.

**Rishî (or Réshî)** The word is supposed to have been derived from the Sañskrit 'rikhî.' (See also 'Islâm in Kashmîr.') In 1891, there were 6,290 members of this community in Kashmîr. In 1911, there were 7,686 Rishis, including 459 in Jammû province and 22 in the 'frontier'.<sup>7</sup> By 1931, their numbers had increased to 10,288. The male: female ratio was 100:82. This is significant, because the Rishî saints were entirely men-and celibate. Clearly, over the centuries the Rishis became a clan, a community. Even Fauq traces the origin of this community to the Rishî saints.

**Sâdhû** The ancestors of this major clan were highly literate and, to quote Fauq, worldly-wise. The clan has several sub-castes, including Mor (pronounced like 'more'), Budchî, Mârû, Sheikh, Mâtak, Qâzî, Mashehdî and Shâh. Much of the clan migrated to Lahore during the Sikh era.

<sup>7</sup> Essentially the areas now in Ladâkh and what Pâkistân called the Northern Areas.



**Shâh** See 'Bâbâ.'

**Shâl** Kashmir has been making pashmînâ (cashmere) shawls since the ancient period. (See the chapter on 'Shawls.') However, the word shawl (or, more correctly, shâl) came to Kashmir only in A.D. 1542, with Naghz Beig. Till then this garment was called 'pombar,' which is the Kashmîrî-Sanskrit compound word for 'robe' or 'garment.' By the mediaeval age Kashmir had a flourishing trade in shâwls. Merchants who traded in them and grew quite wealthy in the process, as well as their descendants, are called Shâls.

**Sûd** The Sûds of Kashmir were known for their learning, which they would pass down the generations. Fauq feels that this is a pre-Islâmic surname that the Muslims retained after their conversion. Some of them were among the closest companions and disciples of Makhdûm Sâheb (see 'Srinagar City.')

**Tâk** This is a trading community. Apparently they are the descendants of the three talented sons of a wealthy Hiñdû of Srinagar. 'Tâk' means 'three.' The other theory is that two Hiñdûs of Srinagar converted to Islâm. One of them went to Bîjbehârâ all alone (*tâk*). So he came to be called Tâk. The other brother went to Kâshghar for several years. On his return he settled in Shopiân, where he came to be known as the Kâshghar Tâk.

**Top Gurû/** These days the Top Gurûs are people who make caps. Top  
**Topé Gurû** Gurû or Tope Gurû is a huge humongous clan, being a coalition of smaller groups. For example, if a Lone or Butt were to start making caps, they, too, would be called 'Top Gurû.'

However, historically some very respectable people have sported this name. Maulânâ Muhammad Âbid was a leading cleric of Srinagar. Once he went to his spiritual master wearing a newfangled cap. The master remarked indulgently, 'Here comes a Top Gurû.'

**Trambû** Trambû is a fruit that grows in the Guréz area. People who traded in it are called the Trambûs.

**Vândar** Vândar and vandar are the Kashmîrî-Hindi word for 'monkey.' For some reason this clan came to be saddled with this, er, moniker. Khwâjâ Ishâq Vandar (18<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), a leading saint, is the first of this clan to be mentioned in a historical record.



**Woin or  
Wânî or  
Wâin**

Before conversion to Islâm the Woins probably belonged to the Vysya (business) caste. Even after conversion to Islâm they continued to be businessmen. The area of their trade has historically included Ladâkh. There were 59,487 Woins/ Wânîs in the state in 1911, and 72,113 in 1931. Some of them migrated to the Punjâb, where they have held high offices.

### Martial Brâhmins

**Pâl**

Lawrence classifies the Pâls among the Brâhmins. He probably based his theory on mediæval historian Ferishtâ's note that '(King) Jai Pâl son of Asan Pâl belonged to the Brâhmin community.'

Fauq disagrees. He argues that Jai Pâl was related to the King of Ajmêr and that Ajmêr was 'obviously' ruled by a Râjpût king. Therefore Jai Pâl, too, must have been a Râjpût. His point is that no Brâhmin would have married into a Râjpût family.

The caste system was never as rigid as modern scholars assume. There is no reason why a Brâhmin could not be related to a Râjpût king. In any case there is a theory that not all Râjpûts are of Kshatriya origin. Some are of martial-Brâhmin stock as well.

On the authority of Ferishtâ and Lawrence I believe that the Pâls are of Brâhmin origin. Which is not to say that they were Kashmîrî Pandits. They are of martial-Brâhmin stock.

### Some other important clans

**Âwân or  
Aiwân**

There were 27,588 Âwâns in the state in 1911, most of them in Poonch (Jammû).

**Bachâ**

Bachâ is Kashmîrî Hîñdî Urdû for 'lad' or 'young boy.' In Kashmîr the word has a specific meaning as well. A *bachâ* is a pretty young lad who dances for a living. There is a very respectable clan of traders of this name in Sopore.

**Chak**

This clan and its history have been discussed in considerable detail in the chapter 'A History of Kashmîr.' Lawrence states that they were certainly not converted from the local Hîñdûs, that they came from Chillâs and were Dards.

**Dév**

This is an eminent clan of ethnic Kashmîrî Muslims who live in Bhaderwâh and Kishtwâr.

**Dîwânî**

Khwâjâ Ishâq Jîlânî (died A.H. 826/ 14<sup>th</sup> century) founded this clan. He was 91 when he was martyred on the orders of Tîmûr's son Shâhrukh Mîrzâ. He was buried in Jîlân.



Khawājā Sibgatullāh belonged to the third generation after Ishāq. He migrated from Herāt to Kashmir during the reign of Sultān Sikaṇḍer (late 14<sup>th</sup> century). Sibgatullāh was a senior member of the ruling elite of his native land. So Sultān Sikaṇḍer granted him an estate in Kashmir. He also gave Sibgatullāh a high rank ('Dafātar Sultān Ālā' or 'the Offices of the exalted Sultan'). As a result his descendants are known as the Dīwānīs.

#### Hāpat

Hāpat means 'bear.' The founder of this clan killed two bears in a single day in the Ānaṭnāg area.

#### Haqqānī

Shāh Qāsim Haqqānī belonged to the fifth generation of the dynasty of Pīr Shams-ud-Dīn Shāmī. The Pīr was an associate of Mīr Syed Alī Hamadānī. (14<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) He was a fearless advocate of the truth (*haq*). Therefore, he came to be known as Haqqānī.

#### Īntū

(Or Aintū or Entū.) This clan used to sell the lids of clay vessels. A few families of this clan live in Sopore.

#### Jahāz

This family was dominant in Kashmir's pashmīnā (cashmere) trade, which in Mughal times (16<sup>th</sup> century and even before) flourished in the Punjāb and during the Sikh era made enormous profits in Western Europe. (See the chapters on 'Handicrafts' and 'Shawls.') Jahāz means 'ship.' A pashmīnā trader from Kashmir once loaded a fortune in shawls onto a ship that was meant to go to France. The ship got caught in a storm and was diverted to some other land. News spread in Kashmir that the ship had sunk. Later when the ship reached France, safe though much delayed, there was much jubilation in Kashmir. The trader's friends promptly named him Jahāz (the ship).

#### Kannū

Kannū is a kind of grass. It yields a fibre with which the Kashmirīs have traditionally woven shoes (*polā harū*). The Hīndū women of Srinagar were the biggest patrons of these leatherless shoes. A persian couplet suggests that this family got such shoes made for 'Hīndū *zanān* (women).'

The Kannū family has produced eminent men of learning and religion, including Muhammad Asraf Yakta, Allāmā Amānullāh (died A.H. 1152/ 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) and the celebrated Khwājā Khairuddīn Baldemārī. Trade was the Kannūs' day job.

#### Kāūsā

#### (Kawoosa)

This clan is not ethnic Kashmirī. However, no one knows the name of the country from which it migrated to Kashmir. The Kāūsās have been in Kashmir since at least the fifteenth or sixteenth century A.D. The first Kāūsā to find mention in



a recorded history was Mullâ Yûsuf. One Nadîm Shâhjahânî introduced him to the court of a Shâhmîrî king. This was to draft a reply to the King of Rûm. The Mullâ did it so well that the king admitted him to the royal court. After that this clan flourished under the Shâhmîrî kings.

**Khatîb**

This is a clan of ethnic Kashmîrî Muslims living in Bhaderwâh and Kishtwâr (both in Jammû province). The founders of the clan used to read the *khuthâ* (sermon).

**Mughal**

Some Kashmîrî and Punjâbî Mughals use the surname 'Mughal.' Before the Mughals annexed Kashmîr (in 1586-89) there had been two major historical figures who used this surname: Hâjî Mughal and Sûfî Mûsâ Mughal. Hâjî Mughal was a pupil and disciple of Sheikh Saifuddîn. He is buried in the courtyard of the seminary of Syed Muhammad Aman (Amîn?) Bakhshî. Sûfî Mûsâ Mughal was a disciple of Makhdûm Sâheb. He had a cheerful and attractive voice, a contemporary record tells us. Clearly, both had migrated to Kashmîr before the Mughals began to rule the Valley. (I wonder: could Sûfî Mûsâ Mughal have persuaded his mentor and fellow disciples to invite the Mughals to rule Kashmîr?) During the Mughal era in Kashmîr there was a Khwâjâ Hayât Mughal. A village called Hayâtpurâ in the Awantipur area is named after him.

**Shâlbâf**

This is a Persian surname that means 'the maker of [pashmînâ] shawls.' The Kashmîrî name for this clan is 'Khañd-wow.'

**Shonthû**

The founder of this clan was very circumspect (*shontû*) in his speech. He would weigh things over thoroughly before offering his opinion on anything.

**Sûfî**

This community has descended from various Hîñdû clans, most of them Brâhmin. Because of their close association with sûfî saints they were given the general title Sûfî.

**The Turks**

The Turks first came to Kashmîr during the pre-Islâmic era. Three (non-Muslim) princes from Turkestân ruled over Kashmîr for a total of 42 years. The Turks attacked Kashmîr during the reign of King Jai Singh. Then during the era of King Sahadev (1301-1320), Zulchû @ Zulqadar Khân devastated Kashmîr. Was Zulchu a Turk? Many historians say that he was. But then, as Fauq says, in Kashmîr all Muslim invaders are called Turks, even Tîmûr and Mehmûd of Ghaznî.



Today most of the Turks of Kashmir are farmers. Some migrated from Muzaffarâbâd as recently as in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. When their fellow Muslims from newly-created Pâkistân ravaged Kashmir in 1947, the Turks of villages like Larî Dorâ (Bârânullâ) personally escorted the microscopic Hiñdû community to the safety of distant Srinagar. Like most Muslims of Kashmir, this community has an excellent record of race relations.

#### **Vakîl**

Mullâ Abdus Salâm was an eminent scholar of the Mughal era. He was the brother-in-law of Murâd-ud-Dîn Khân, through whose good offices he managed to become a lawyer (*vakîl*) in one of the Mughal courts. The name has carried down to his descendants. (Not all Vakîls of Kashmir, leave alone India as a whole, belong to this clan. However, Abdus Salâm's is the main Vakîl clan of Kashmir.)

### **Castes associated with culture and specialised professions**

#### **Bâñd**

These are talented singers, actors and satirists. They have been mentioned at several places in this book, especially in connection with festivals. Also spelt Bhâñd. They have eponymous counterparts in parts of the Punjâb, too.

#### **Chopân**

Kashmîrî (as opposed to Bakerwâl) shepherds.

#### **Dom**

According to Lawrence the Doms or Dûms were *shûdr* (underprivileged) Hiñdûs before their conversion. Makes sense, because there are underclass Dûm Hiñdûs in Jammû as well.

#### **Gallâ-bân**

The Gallâ-bâns (or Galbâns, or Galwâns) rear horses. One such horse-rearer, called Galwân, used to provide horses to British officers of the Râj. He learnt a smattering of English and went on to author an early-20<sup>th</sup> century pidgin classic called *Servant of the Sâhibs*.

#### **Hânjî**

There is a detailed section on the Hânjî boatmen of Kashmir in the chapter 'The People of Kashmir.'

#### **Wâtal**

These are the charpeople of Kashmir. Their festival at Hazratbal used to be a major annual event. Thanks to prosperity, many of them have given up their ancestral profession but also some of their customs.

### **The Kashmîrî Pañdits**

The number of Kashmîrî Pañdit clans is so large that my list is at best a sample.



### The Qistbâshî Pañdits

This is a community that used to collect taxes in ancient and mediæval times. They took on the names of whoever or whatever they collected taxes from. Their names are quite unflattering, because they mean things like 'ass.' The names actually mean '[people who collect taxes from]...'.  
 The Q

**Âram** This community used to collect taxes from the ârams (vegetable-growers) for the government. There is a major neighbourhood in Sopore called Ârampurâ, where vegetable-growers live. The word is derived from the Saṅskrit âramak and is mentioned in the *Rājātaraṅginī*.

**Baqâyâ** Baqâyâ is the Persian word for 'that which remains' or 'arrears.' This community used to collect tax arrears for the government.

**Gazarbân** If you read the chapter 'Traditional routes between Srinagar and Muzaffarâbâd' you will come across references to customs houses. The Gazarbâns were people who collected this duty.

**Gurû** Surprise. Gurû does not mean what you think it does. In Kashmîr this is a community of cowherds and milkmen. Gurû is the Kashmîrî word for Gujjar. People who taxed the Gujjar cowherds or were patwâris (junior most but powerful revenue officials), too, were called Gurûs.

**Khar or Kher** (Khur, actually.) Khar and khur mean 'donkey' or 'ass.' This clan used to collect taxes from those whom we now call 'pony-owners.'

**Krâl** 'pony-owners.'  
Krâl means potter. Krâlapurâ in Srinagar is where the potters have a major presence. The Krâls used to collect taxes from potters.

**Manwatî** potters.  
Manwatî is a weight equal to a little more than a kilogram. The rice crop would be measured by the *manwatî*. People who collected taxes on the rice crop were called Manwatî. Some people believe the legend then this

**Nehrû** who collected taxes on the rice crop were called Nehr means canal. Don't ever believe the legend then this community used to live next to a canal. The fact is that the Nehrûs used to collect water-taxes and taxes levied on embankments where boats would land.

**Qâzî** Hîndûs as well as Muslims who collected taxes on gold (and on gold related disputes) were called Qâzî. I always thought that a Qâzî was necessarily a Muslim religious judge. This particular use of the word, instead, derives from *qazâyâ*, which means 'dispute, case, [law] suit, quarrel.'



### Important Clans of the Kashmîrî Pandits

Below are likely explanations for the origin of some of the best known Kashmîrî Pañdit surnames. If you read the section 'Surnames and nicknames' in the chapter 'The People of Kashmîr' before you read the table below, you might appreciate that many of these names started off as a joke.

You will notice in this chapter that people come to be known by the name of their ancestral village only after they migrate to some other village of town. I suppose that makes sense. Pam French is certainly British. So, I believe, is Andre Deutsch. No one within France would need to be called 'French' or 'Français.' It's only when you migrate to another land that your ancestral land becomes a mark of your identity. That's the way you see yourself and that's how the natives of your adopted land see you.

**Arz-bégi** All over the Indian sub-continent illiterate people go to petition-writers to draft their letters and applications. Such people are known as Arz-bégis.

**Atal** See Thalal.

**Badhû or Bajû** In Kashmîr, as in 19<sup>th</sup> century Punjâb, Hiñdûs, Muslims and Sikhs consider it auspicious to give their children this name. It is said to make the person so named live very long.

**Bakhshî** Muslims as well as Hiñdûs who were accountants in the army and distributed salaries were known as Bakhshis.

**Bazâz** This is a large clan spread over central India as well. Their ancestors used to sell cloth.

**Bhân** Bhân(u) means 'the sun.' This is a very ancient clan. Their traditional home is the Bhân Muhallâ, which is between the Habbâ Kadal and the Fateh Kadal.

**Chakâ** The founder of this clan was the last of twelve children. Apparently his parents were slightly embarrassed at having such a large brood.

**Chakbast** Chak means 'a plot of land.' Such plots were (and often still are) granted by the government of the day to farmers and others. Officers who oversaw such land grants were called *chakbast*s.

**Fota-dâr/ Fotedâr** The founders of this clan were senior officers of the Mughal treasury. (The literal meaning of this Persian-Arabic name would be 'a person with, er, testicles.' However, no respectable dictionary supports such an interpretation.)

**Gandnû** The name refers to 'a bunch (of flowers).' Apparently this family was in the bouquet-making trade.



- Gurtû** This is an offshoot of the Râzdân clan. They belong to the Kûchâ Râzdânâñ of Gand Al-hamar. One of this clan, Pt. Mukund Râm Gurtû, migrated to Lahore in the middle of the nineteenth century and was the first Kashmîrî to publish a newspaper.
- Hakîm** This Arabic word means 'the doctor' or 'the healer.' Fauq feels that there must have been doctors in this clan, which gave them their name.
- Handû** Handû is the Kashmîrî word for 'sheep.' Apparently, the founder of this clan was 'as fat as a sheep.'
- Hazârî** Sardâr Hazâr Khân was the governor of Kashmîr during the Afghân era. Fauq's theory is that the Hazârîs were his trusted lieutenants. I thought that they had something to do with the Hazârâ district.
- Ishberî** Same as among Muslims.
- Jawân Shér** This is an Afghân name. There was an Afghân governor by this name. His 'reader' (judicial clerk) took on the surname of his boss<sup>8</sup>.
- Kâchrû** A very old elite family. It has produced eminent historians and writers.
- Kakrû** There is a village called Kakrû Guñd near Achhâbal (Ânañtnâg). That's where the Kakrûs came from. Fauq believes that the Koker Nâg spring is named after this clan. (But the standard theory is that the spring is named so because it looks like the claws of a *koker* [chicken].)
- Kalposh** Kalposh is a cap worn by Hiñdû as well as Muslim women. A male of this clan once wore a kalposh as a joke. His clan came to be known by the name.
- Kannû** The name is derived from the Kashmîrî words for 'tasteless,' 'food without salt' and 'as thin as water.' Once a saint from Rainâwâri, Miâñ (Mânak) Shâh, asked a Kaul, 'What was the food at the feast like?' The Kaul replied, 'Tasteless. Thin as water. There was no salt in the food.' The saint commented, 'In that case you are a Kanîn Kaul.' The word gradually changed to Kannû.
- Kanzrû** Kunzer is a major satellite village of Gulmarg and Tañgmarg. That's where the Kanzrûs (or Kunzrûs) come from.

<sup>8</sup> Taking the name of the boss' clan was quite widespread. In Lolâb, within forty years of Dogrâ rule a (Muslim) clan began to call itself 'Dogrâ' because its members had served the Dogrâ rulers for two generations.



- Kâr** This clan comes from a village called Kârhamâ in tehsil Handwârâ (Kupwârâ) in north Kashmir. That's where the Kârs come from.
- Karvâiyûñ** Karvâiyûñ means 'hot water' as well as 'those who sell peas.' This sub-sect actually belongs to the Dêv Shândliya clan and are Malmâs pañdits.
- Kât(h)jû** Kâthêshwar was an ancient pilgrimage near Tanki Kadal in Srinagar. In the Dogrâ era a new temple was built on its foundations. The Kât(h)jû clan lived in this neighbourhood.
- Katwâ** This is a sub-sect of the Wâzâ clan. Katwâ is the Kashmirî word for 'small cooking vessel.'
- Kilam** These are the former residents of Killam, a village in Kulgâm tehsil (Ânañtnâg).
- Killa-wât** An Englishman named Col. Watt supervised the construction of the Pahalgâm road. He had a Kashmirî Pañdit man Friday called Kailash Nâth. In Kashmir 'Kailash' normally gets shortened to the nickname 'Killa.' Because of his association with Col. Watt, he (and his descendants) came to be called Killa-wât.
- Kotrû** Kotrû or Kotar is the Kashmirî equivalent of the Hiñdî-Urdû word *kabûtar* (pigeon). Apparently, the founder of the clan had a large number of pet pigeons.
- Kurâz** Kurâz is the name of a fierce animal.
- Lâbrû** Literally, 'the profiteer.' Lâb(h) is Sañskrit for 'profit' and 'benefit.' This is a clan of businessmen.
- Lâl** These are Kashmirî Pañdits whose ancestors had served under Punjâbî *lâlâs* (middling businessmen).
- Lañgar or Lañgrû** A lañgar is a community kitchen. The founder of this clan was the chief administartor of some ancient, government-run, community kitchen.
- Langû** Langû means 'the lame one.' Fauq feels that the founder of the clan was lame. But would people call someone with specially abled limbs 'lame'? I wonder. My guess is that the original Mr. Langû was merely faking it. People saw through his sham and started teasing him.
- Mallâ or Mullâ** No, this name has nothing to do with Muslim priesthood. It's just a coincidence that the two words are identical. There are two theories about their origin: i) They were vegetable-growers (*malyâr*) or, as is more likely, they collected *malyâr* taxes. ii) They are the original residents of Srinagar's Mallâpurî neighbourhood (near Ganpatyâr). This clan has truly



distinguished itself in Allahâbâd and other parts of central India, as jurists as well as brave soldeirs.

**Mantû**

This sub-group is related to the Manwatî clan. *Man tî* means one and a half *sér* (almost one kilogram). The legend, almost certainly apocryphal (because it so resembles the etymology of Manwatî), is that the founder of the clan had eaten a *man tî* of rice in a single meal.

**March-  
wâñgan  
Misrî**

The name literally means 'red chilli.' This moniker was given to a hot-tempered clan.

Misrî means 'the Egyptian.' I had always thought that names like Misrî and Parimû ('the foreigner') suggested that these clans had come from foreign lands. They could possibly be the Jews who keep popping up in theories about the origin of the Kashmîrî people. Fauq has a different spin. He says that the first Mr. Misrî was the local agent of an Egyptian trader.

**Motâ**

Fauq's theory is that 'motâ' means 'fatso,' the same as in Hîndî-Urdû. The founder of the clan was horizontally enhanced, according to Fauq.

**Mubaî or  
Mumbaî**

This is the pen-name of a Kashmîrî Pañdit family whose members had gone to Bombay (which, even then, was called Mumbai by the local people). One of this family was a well-known journalist, who wrote for a community magazine.

**Munshî**

This is a sub-caste of the Tikkû clan. Munshîs are (accounts) clerks. There was a very celebrated Munshî during the Sikh or Afghân era. He gave up his ancestral surname and preferred to be called Munshî instead. Apparently it was a big thing to be a Munshî in those days.

**Mushrân**

Mushrân means 'ugly like a fierce demon.' The word is the stuff of popular Kashmîrî curses. This community has been living in central India since at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. I don't buy the theory that the original Mr. Mushrân was truly challenged in the looks department. That's because a) the present generation is quite nice looking, and b) one doesn't remind homely people that they are that. Obviously, this nickname came off as a joke.

**Nâlâ**

This is the nickname of a clan of Dattâ-tréya Kashmîrî Pañdits. Apparently, they were the superintendents or protectors of a stream (nâllâh).

**Ogrâ**

This is a sub-sect of the Dattâ-tréya clan.



- Pâmpori** The Kashmirî Pañdits of Pâmpore (Pulwâmâ) are, regardless of their sub-caste, called Pâmpori by the people of Srinagar.
- Pehelwân** Pehelwân means i) a champion, ii) a successful wrestler and iii) a member or retainer of the Pehalvi dynasty of Irân. I always assumed that the Pehelwâns of Kashmir belonged to the third category. Fauq, however, tells us about the legendary Gawâb Pehelwân, who belonged to this tiny clan. His point is that this was a clan of muscular athletes. He adds that among the Kashmirî Pañdits the other champion athletes were the Shérâs and among the Muslims the star wrestlers were from the Sabahâ clan.
- Peshin** Peshin means 'evening.' It is also the Persian word for the *zuhr* prayers. Apparently, the ancestors of this clan were government servants whose main duty started after the *peshin* prayers.
- Pîr** Pîr Pañdit Pâdshâh (16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) was one of the greatest Kashmirî Pañdit saints ever. His temple is in Bata-yâr, Âli Kadal. The Muslims, too, respect him enormously. All Kashmirî Pañdits who sport the surname Pîr are descendants of the disciples of this saint, who was also called Rishî Pîr.
- Pûrbi** Literally, 'the easterner.' This is a 19<sup>th</sup> century moniker given by some officials in Delhi to a Kashmirî Pañdit who held high office under the Nawâbs (rulers) of Lucknow (a city which is to the east of Kashmir and Delhi).
- Qulî** This name came to Kashmir from Afghânistân. During the Afghân era there were two famous Afghân chieftains—Târ Qulî Khân and Nûr Jañg Qulî Khân Durrânî. Kashmirî Pañdits who grew close to (and/ or received employment under) these chiefs took on their surnames.
- Raghû or Ragû** No, this clan did not get its name from the Prince of Ayodhyâ. The name, instead, means 'the skinny one.' Apparently the founder of this clan was slightly built.
- Sabû** This clan would perform priestly (*purohit*) functions in Srinagar town.
- Saprû** The Saprûs were the first group of Kashmirî Pañdits to learn the Persian language. (This was in the reign of Budshâh, in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.)
- Sas** Sas is a mainly vegetarian dish. Apparently the founder of this clan was asked what he had eaten at a feast that he had been to. He replied, 'Sas.'



- Shagâlî** This clan came over from Kâbul with the Afghâns. Their founder had the title 'Mirzâ' and the surname Shagâlî. His given name was Mal or Mamal.
- Shâlâ** The Shâlâs are the residents of Shâlâ Kadal (near Habbâ Kadal).
- Shanglû** Shanglû literally means 'a person with six (*shay*) fingers (*ungal*).' Apparently, the first Shanglû had six fingers in one of his hands.
- Shargâ** Shargâ means 'parrot.' People with parrot-like eyes, too, are called Shargâ. This is a sub-caste of the Kauls. The Shargâs migrated to central India and produced eminent littérateurs.
- Shâyar** Literally: the poet. The founder of this clan was an eminent poet of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Mughals were fading and the Afghâns were on the ascendant.
- Shér** A very brave and well-built clan, renowned for its physical prowess. According to a legend, the founder of the clan had grappled with a 'lion' (presumably, a leopard).
- Soporî** This clan migrated from Sopore to Srinagar in ancient times.
- Sukâ** The name refers to a sour kind of yeast. It derives from the Saṅskrit 'sur-âhâr' ('to drink alcohol').
- Sukhiyâ** There are some families of Kashmîrî Paṇḍit *purohīts* that are called sakh, sikh or even sukh. In central India they are called Sukhiyâ.
- Sultân** These were the agents and representatives of the sultâns of Kashmîr. They took on their masters' title.
- Thalal** Thalal means 'to collide (against someone or something).' It also refers to people whose broad foreheads indicate a high rank. The name Atal is certainly derived from Thalal. (In the chapter 'Were the Kashmîris Jews?' I have argued that Atal might be a Saṅskrit word. It is. However, the Kashmîrî names Qâzî, Walî and Gurû only by a coincidence sound like identical Arabic and Saṅskrit names. Similarly, it is possible that the two Atals might be totally different words.)
- Thussû** There's a village called Thus in the Kulgâm tehsîl of south Kashmîr. When the Kashmîrî Paṇḍits of Thus migrated to Srinagar they came to be called Thussû.
- Timni** The correct pronunciation is Tâi-manî. Fauq's guess is that this clan might have descended from the *munîs* (ascetics).
- Tork or Turk or Turkî** Fauq's theory is that such Kashmîrî Paṇḍits as were the agents of Turkish traders started calling themselves after their employers. Kashmîr's close links with Turkey and



Turkmenist  n date to well before Isl  m came to either land. There were Turks (*turushk*) in the pre-Isl  mic armies of Kashmir. Can't the Kashmiri Pa  dits who bear these names be of Turkish stock?

Kashmir has a very substantial population of (Muslim) Turks in the hills. They are quite poor and speak a form of Punj  bi or Pah  rhi at home.

**Ukhul or  
Vukhul or  
Wukhl  **

The Ukhuls live mostly in central India and the Punj  b. Their Kashmiri ancestors were (and cousins still are) known as Vukhul or Wukhl  . An Ukhul is a stone on which dirty wet clothes are beaten during their cleaning. Because there were no washermen or laundries, such stones were kept in every neighbourhood. Kashmiri Pa  dits in whose houses these stones were placed were called the Ukhuls.

**Vich  ri**

In Sa  skrit, Vich  ri would literally mean 'the thinker.' Fauq supports this theory. However, I suspect that this clan came from the Vich  r N  g area.

**Vishen**

The clan has been named after its founder. Vishen is the Kashmiri word for Lord Vishn  .

**Wali**

Surprise. Wali is derived not from the Muslim word for saint but from wal   (see below).

**Wal  **

A wal   is a hole in the wall through which the Kashmiri chimney lets smoke escape to the outside. Apparently the man who invented this chimney-hole was given the title Wal  .

**W  nch  **

Fauq writes that no one is sure about how this name came into being. It is perhaps a variant of W  nt   or W  nchi.

**W  ngn  **

W  ngan is the Kashmiri word for brinjal (eggplant). This vegetable might be great for health but it is the favourite of very few people. The founder of this clan was either excessively fond of this unpopular food or hated it so much that his friends started calling him by this name in order to tease him.

**W  nt  **

A w  nt   is a walnut without a kernel, or with a very inadequate seed.

**W  tal**

My friend Rattan W  tal told me that 'W  tal' means 'sweeper' or 'charperson.' The w  tals were 'untouchables' under the caste system. Some of Rattan's ancestors gave the w  tals shelter for a few days. This, in the eyes of their hidebound contemporaries, was enough to pollute Rattan's ancestors. So, Rattan's ancestors came to be called the W  tals.



- Wâzâ** A clan of chefs and cooks.
- Wazîr** According to Fauq, Kashmirî Pañdit employees in the offices of Mughal and Afghân governors and viziers came to be called Wazîrs themselves.  
I have no doubt that the ancestors of at least some present-day Kashmirî Pañdit Wazîrs were full-fledged viziers themselves.
- Zâbû** This is a sub-sect of the Râzdâns. Apparently one of their ancestors was slightly built, hence the name.
- Zâdû** This is a clan of *purohīts* (priests). Zâdû means 'land,' more accurately 'wetland.' The Zâdûs are a people who live deep inside the inhabited part of a town or village: in the downtown, so to speak.
- Zutshî** Also called Jotshî. This is a clan of astrologers.

### Prominent émigré clans

The prominent émigré Kashmirî Pañdit clans of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were:

**Chhachh-balî** Chhatâbal is a suburb of Srinagar. It is also known as Chhachhbal. The Râzdân Pañdits used to live there. Pañdit Kishen Dâs of this family migrated from Kashmir in 1757. He first went to Lucknow and Benâres. His family came to be called Chhachh-balî because of their ancestral neighbourhood. His grandson, Pañdit Gañgâ Râm held a commission in the army and was posted in Delhi during the Marâthâ era.

**Dar** During Emperor Aurangzêb's era, one of his army contingents was stationed at a border post near Muzaffarâbâd. The commandant got talking about roots with one of his juniors, Shiv Pañdit. He asked Shiv to tell him about his ancestors. Shiv was too embarrassed to admit that he didn't know. So, he wrote to his elder brother Parshist Pañdit in Srinagar to mail him the details. Parshist, too, expressed his ignorance. However, he penned down what he knew for sure. That was about the two preceding generations. This helped them trace the family's roots up to Mêrû Pañdit, who had come to Kashmir with the army of Empress Nûr Jehân. The two brothers then decided that they would maintain a careful record of the history of their family.

As a result the Dars are the only Kashmirî Pandits-according to Fauq the only [ethnic] Kashmirîs-who have a detailed record of the history of their family.



Lawrence notes that the Dar family has 'probably been the most influential' of all Kashmîrî Pandits. But, he adds, 'proverbs suggest that their influence has not been beneficial.' The proverb in question is: 'The Dars like doors should be locked up.' (My interpretation: Losers are jealous of all prominent families. Besides, in Dar there was a pun too delicious to resist. 'Dar' also means 'door'.)

**Dattâ-tréya** Even before the era of *The Mahâbhârata* there lived in a village near Bârânullâ a Saṅskrit scholar and poet called Atrî. His wife Anusûyâ, too, was a great scholar. His work *The Atréya* is an important extant work on religion. Their son, Dattâ-tréya, founded the bloodline named after him.

**Ghamkhwâr** This is essentially a Delhi and, before 1947, Lahore clan. It consists of a handful of households. Basically they are Kauls. They migrated from Kashmîr to Âgrâ at the invitation of Emperor Akbar's government. His son, Emperor Jehânghîr, kept them in his inner circle in Lahore and Kashmîr. Emperor Shâh Jehân patronised them in an even bigger way. He gave them their highest rank. He made them *mansabdârs* with a rank of 5,000. He also gave them a large estate and house in Delhi. (The name literally means 'he who eats sorrows,' or 'he who is always in a state of sorrow'.)

**Haksar** In the Uttar Machhipurâ area of Bârânullâ there is a village called Hâkchharpurâ. The paṇdits of this village are variously called Hâkchhar, Hâksar and Haksar.

**Kâk** 'Kâk' is the Kashmîrî word for 'elder brother' or 'respectable elder.' The founder of the clan was a respected paṇdit who became a *sâdhû* (saint). People would call him 'kâk' out of respect. His descendants are known as the Kâks.

**Kaul** This is one of the oldest bloodlines among the Kashmîrî Pandits. According to Saṅskrit histories, a kaul is a person who destroys all worldly desires and rises above them. A very large number of Kashmîrî Pandits who do not use the surname Kaul actually belong to this clan. There are as many as thirty-six branches of this huge lineage. These are Aimâ, Bâbû, Bamchuñt, Bâmzaî, Bajû, Chaudhari, Dâñder, Dâñgar, Drâbî, Dont, Hâk, Jalâlî, Jinsî, Jotâ, Kâk, Kaptî, Kasû, Kothédâr, Ladâkhi, Manjzîn [Magazine?], Mañdal, Mozâ, Makhnas, Nigârî, Ogrâ (or Vagrâ), Padar, Pehelwân, Râfiz, Sâheb, Shargâ, Shogâ, Sangârâ, Salmân, Sultân, Totâ, Zamîndâr, Tilwân.



- Kichlû, Kitchlû, Kitchlew** 'Kichlû' means 'long beard.' Apparently, the founder of the clan had a long beard. This family earned a name for itself in Lahore, where they were Déwâns in the court of Mahârâjâ Ranjît Singh. Déwân Rattan Chañd was famous for his long beard. Most of the branch that stayed on in Kashmîr converted to Islâm.
- Madan** The Madans are a clan of Râzdâns who used to live in the Madan Mohallâ near Habbâ Kadal, Srînagar.
- Mattû (with hard t's)** The Mattûs, Kâchrûs and Fotédârs are members of the same *gotr* (bloodline): Patswâmin Kaushik. The best theory about the origin of the name is that it is derived from *math* (seminary). The keeper of a Sañskrit-school and or religious seminary would be called a mathû.
- Rainâ** The Rainâs are the same people as the Râzdâns.
- Râzdân** 'Râzdân' seems to be a Persian word that might mean 'the confidant.' However, the 1891 census says that it is a corruption of the Sañskrit 'râjâñk.'
- Tikkû** A Brâhmin of Srînagar had no children of his own. He adopted a Râjpût child. The pañdits put a *tilak* (smear made of sacred herbs) on the child's forehead and said, 'This boy was not born a Brâhmin. But he has become a Brâhmin through adoption.' The descendants of that child are known as the Tikkûs.
- Trisal** A branch of the Dar family returned to Kashmîr in the mediæval era and produced eminent members. Later the family of Nékû Pañdit adopted a Râzdân Rainâ youth called Mansâ Râm from a village called Trisal in Pulwâmâ. His descendants are called the Trisals.

### Miân Râjpûts

A few clans of Dogrâ Râjpûts of the ruling family were given estates, mainly in the Deosar tehsil. Many of them chose not to migrate from Kashmîr in the 1990s.

Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century they had taken so completely to Kashmîrî ways that there was little resemblance between them and their cousins in Jammû. Some of them started marrying Kashmîrî Pandits. Thus some of them started merging with their only other Hiñdû brethren in the Valley.



## The Khakhâs, Bambâs and Hatmâls

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### The Khakhâs and Hatmâls

*Theories about their origin:* The Khakhâs are one of the two most important clans of the Muzaffarâbâd region. (The other is the Bambâ clan.) Writing in 1934, Muhammad-ud-Deen 'Fauq' said that they were 'new Muslims' and of Chañdrabañsî Râjpût lineage. Classifying them as 'new Muslims' several centuries after their conversion to Islâm seems quite strange.

Râjâ Mal (later Mal Khân) was probably a contemporary of the Mughal Emperor Bâbar (early 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). It is almost certain<sup>1</sup> that he had accepted Islâm and was the first of his line to do so. However, *The Rajput Gazetteer* asserts that Mal remained a Hiñdû and that the conversion came much later.

According to some family-trees of the clan, Mal was a descendant of Arjun, the legendary Pâñdav, and belonged to the twelfth (or forty-ninth) generation after him. (The figure twelve is too conservative. Even forty-nine generations would suggest that the Pâñdavs lived around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.)

He must have been a man of considerable personal wealth, for he founded a series of salt mines in the Punjâb. Some records maintained by his descendants imply that he was the first to mine salt in the Punjâb.

Mal then established a town (probably called Namak Wakan or Namak Dakan). One of his sons, Tarnolî (or Tarlonî), went on to establish the Tanolî dynasty. Another son was probably called Khakhâ. (The minority view is that Khakhâ was a descendant and not the son of Mal. He belonged to the tenth generation after Mal. According to this version, Khakhâ was the son of Râjâ Nasrullâh Khân. He had an elder brother called Hatam or Hâtam Khân.)

<sup>1</sup> His children continued to have Hiñdû- sounding names, derived from local traditions.



The Khakhâs are very closely related to the Hatmâl clan of Râjpûts. All records agree that in ancient (or mediæval) times there were two Chañdrabañsî Râjpûts brothers. The Hatmâls are the descendants of the elder brother, and the Khakhâs of the younger brother. If we go by the minority view, they could be the descendants of the sons of Nasrullah Khân, Hatam and Khakhâ, respectively. Traditionally, men from the Hatmâl clan have accepted Khakhâ brides. However, they try not to give their own girls in marriage to the Khakhâs.

The histories written by the Rajpûts themselves differ somewhat. They say that there was a king called Kshatri Pâl in the thirty-sixth generation after Arjun. Kshatri Pâl had eighteen children. Nine of them founded as many clans, which are named after them. Two of these nine sons were called Khakhâ and Bambâ. Their descendants are respectively called the Khakhâs and Bambâs.

*The ancient era/ The Khash clan:* The *Râjâtaraṅginî* mentions the Khash clan at several places. Its translator, Sir Aurel Stein, has marshalled evidence to prove that it is the Khash people who are now known as the Khakhâs. The Khash clan had ruled over the areas now called Râjourî, Poonch and, according to Fauq, the Valley of Kashmîr as well. Indeed, they had even built forts in and held sway over the Chenâb valley near Bânihâl.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the Khash clan lived on the banks of the Jehlum between Bârâmullâ and the Punjâb. In Urî tehsîl (and in the adjacent parts of Poonch) this is the precise area when the Khakhâs later lived. Therefore, Stein concludes that the Khash and Khakhâ, respectively, are the ancient and modern names of the same people.

There have traditionally been a number of Khakhâ and Hatmâl landlords and other aristocrats in Urî tehsîl. Muzaffarâbâd is the other region where the Khakhâ elite has historically lived. This clan lives in Kotli (Poonch, Jammû), too.

*The clan shifts to the Punjâb, and converts to Islâm:* Srîpat was a descendant of Arjun. According to some records, Sultân Shahâb-ud-Dîn Ghaurî evicted King Srîpat and his clan from Mathurâ (central India) in A.D. 1194. He settled them in Kohistân Namak (Punjâb) instead, where he gave them an estate (*jâgîr*). Of Srîpat's three sons, Dhrupat succeeded him to the throne. Dhrupat did not have a son, but was desperate to have a male heir. A sûfî saint blessed him and said, 'You will beget a son. But when he grows up he will convert to Islâm.' The king replied, 'I accept that. At least my dynasty will not come to an end with me. My son will keep the name of our clan alive.'



When the boy was born he was given the name Mal and was brought up as a Hîfîdû. Decades later, after he had inherited his father's throne, Mal once went past an Islâmic school. He heard the teacher explain to his students a Persian verse about the oneness of God. The verse left a deep impact on Mal, who accepted Islâm. He changed his name to Mal Khân.

Historians like Hassan<sup>2</sup> say that Khakhâ Khân and Hâthû Khân were Muslim Râjpût chieftains and brothers. Both served Kashmir's 15<sup>th</sup> century Emperor Budshâh loyally and well. Budshâh rewarded them by giving each an estate. However, as Fauq points out, Budshâh's own chronicler, Jonarâj, makes no mention of either the brothers or the tribes known after them.

Most records state that Khakhâ had a brother called Johd. Both were the sons of Râjâ Mal. The equally illustrious Janjûâ clan has descended from Johd. However, the family-trees of this dynasty claim that Mal was a Râjpût of Râthor (and not Chahdrabañsi) lineage.

*Population figures:* Fauq noticed that there was no mention of the Hatmâl clan in the various censuses of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He rightly concluded that they had been counted with the Khakhâs and that the two had been assumed to be a single clan.

In 1891, the population of the Khakhâs (and Hatmâls) was all of 4,061. By 1931, it had increased to 7,839. Of these 4,331 were men and 3,508 women. This works out to 810 women for every 1,000 men. Few places outside North India and Pâkistân have such a terrible record. However, if you think that this is a world record, you don't know nothing yet. Just read on.

## The Bambâs

*The origins of the tribe:* Hassan's theory is that this clan has descended from Bani Ummiyâh, an exalted Arab tribe. The community itself subscribes to this theory. They believe that they are descendants of Hazrat Usmân (Uthmân), who was one of the four Righteous Caliphs of Islâm (7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.).

When Bani Ummiyâh went into a decline, one of its members migrated to Badakshân (Central Asia). He met Zulchu there and migrated to Kashmir with him. (See 'The decline of the Loharas' in the chapter 'A History of Kashmir.' Fauq says that Zulchu's full name was Z'ul Qadr Khân and that he came to Kashmir in A.D. 1323. Fauq has probably got that date wrong by several decades.) Since 'Bani Ummiyâh' is quite a tongue twister, Hassan feels that the name was shortened to 'Bambâ.'

2 The 19<sup>th</sup> century author of *Târikh é Kashmir* (better known as the *Târikh é Hassan*).



Historian Pt. Har Gopal Kaul<sup>iii</sup> feels that the word 'Brâhmin' got corrupted to make 'Bambâ' and the word 'Khatrî' to yield 'Khakhâ.' (I have no opinion on what these clan-names are a corruption of. However, knowing the languages of the area, I have no doubt that these are corruptions of words beginning with 'b' and 'kh' respectively.)

According to a third theory, Bamli Khân and Khakhâ Khân were brothers. They migrated to Kashmîr from Turkestân and founded the tribes called... well, by now you know the rest. The problem is that none of the half-dozen extant family-trees<sup>3</sup> of the Khakhâ tribe mentions Bamli Khân.

The family-trees maintained by the Pathâniâ Râjpûts of the Punjâb mention a Râjâ Kshatrî Pâl in the 34<sup>th</sup> generation. He had eighteen sons, one of whom was called Bambâ. The Bambâs are his descendants.

The *Râjâtaraṅginî* mentions a clan named Bolhab, which was closely related to the Khash tribe. British Râj scholars identify these two with the later-day Bambâ and Khakhâ clans respectively.

A 'martial race': The Bambâs are, without a doubt, a clan of able warriors and administrators. I don't believe in 'racial characteristics.' However, the history of the wars fought by the Bambâs reveals that their military strategy was always excellent, they were able bodied and they never gave up easily.

*The founders of Muzaffarâbâd:* When the Shâhmîrî dynasty collapsed in Kashmîr, the Chaks took over most of Kashmîr. That's when Sultân Muzaffar Khân, the chief of the Bambâs, prised the border areas of Kashmîr loose and founded an independent hill kingdom (c.962 hijrî/ 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). He built the town of Muzaffarâbâd as the capital of this kingdom. (See also the chapter on "'Âzâd' Jammû and Kashmîr.")

Fauq adds, 'It was in the power of the Bambâs to decide whether to defend Kashmîr against invaders from abroad or to team up with foreigners and destroy Kashmîr. That is why every invader who went to Kashmîr through Pakhlî or Muzaffarâbâd was obliged to come to an understanding with the *sardârs* (chiefs) of the Bambâ tribe.'

Sultân Muzaffar Khân had a son called Sultân Haibat Khân Sâni. Haibat's descendants continued to hold sway over their ancestral land, with the titles of 'sultân' and 'râjâ' till 1947, even though they came under the overall control of the person then ruling Kashmîr.

Some Bambâ chiefs were totally independent of the king of Kashmîr. Others enjoyed degrees of autonomy.

3 Also called 'pedigree-tables.'



*Population and census figures:* The censuses conducted during the Dogrâ-British era accepted the Bambâs as one of the important clans of Muslim Râjpûts. They have traditionally lived on the right banks of the Jehlum. The area that they live in begins near the boundaries of Bâramullâ. It goes through Hazârâ district and comes to an end in beautiful Kâgân. Some of them live in Râwalpiñdî (Pâkistân). They have a small presence in Poonch, too.

In 1891, there were all of 999 Bambâs. In 1911, their population zoomed to 1,462. Of these 823 were men and 639 women. This works out to 77.6 women for every 100 men. Makes the Khakhâs look like enlightened new age male feminists in comparison. The Bambâs' must surely be the worst male: female ratio even by the standards of our benighted sub-continent.

In 1931, there were 3,602 Bambâs in the state. Of them, 66 were in Jammû province and 3,536 in Kashmîr. The male: female ratio by then was 100:96.5 (or 1,836:1,773), an incredible increase.

The other dramatic change seems to have been in the total population of the clan. Fauq reminds us that it has been recorded that in the year 1799, Sardâr Abdullâh Khân Alkozî, the then administrator of Kashmîr, recruited 3,000 foot soldiers and horsemen from the Bambâ tribe into his army. Fauq argues that if just the number of able-bodied young male soldiers was three thousand, then the total population of the clan must have been around twenty thousand.

In olden times the word was also pronounced, 'Bambû' and 'Bamâ.' That is how it has been spelt in the old Persian histories written in India, as well as in Mughal and Afghân records. Bano Mambâ is another variant.

### References

- i. *Târîkh Aqwâm é Kashmîr* by Muhammad-ud-Deen 'Fauq' (Lahore, 1934), Chinari Publishing House, Srinagar (reprinted 1996).
- ii. *The Rajput Gazette*, Lahore, 22 April, 1933, quoted by Fauq.
- iii. *Guldastâ é Kashmîr*, also quoted by Fauq.



# Religion







## 25

### The Sri Amarnâthji Yatra

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The cave of Sri Amarnâth ji (3,962 metres/ 12,995 ft.) contains a naturally formed Shivling made of ice. The pilgrimage (yatra) to this Holy Cave started in an organised manner around 1850, during the reign of the Dogrâ Mahârâjâ Gulab Singh. This yatra is perhaps thousands of years old. However, as far as recorded history (or memory) is concerned this ice lingam (a Shaivite fertility symbol) was discovered by Adam Malik, a Muslim shepherd from Batakot, in the 17th or 18th century A.D.

In return, the Mahârâjâ decreed that a representative of the Malik family would be present at the cave shrine along with the Mahant (priest) and the Pandits of Bhavan and Ganeshporâ. As a result, till A.D. 2000, the Maliks would receive one-third of all the offerings made at the shrine. The Mahârâjâ also granted the Maliks a large *jagir* (estate) near Pahalgâm and exempted them from having to pay land revenue. The family has since migrated to the Mattan Wudder plateau near the famous Sun temple of Martand.

Before Gulab Singh, his Sikh mentor, Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh of Lahore (Punjab), would patronise the *yatra* (circa 1817). Ranjit paid Rs. 2 to every religious person who agreed to perform the pilgrimage. In those days the holy mace (chharhi mubarak) would be stored in Amritsar, which is close to Lahore. The procession to the Holy Cave would start from Amritsar.

The Dogrâs later shifted the resting-place of the holy chharhi to the Dashnami Akhara of Srînagar. (This is on the main Maulana Âzâd Road, just before the Budshah Bridge.) During the 1990s, the holy mace was shifted to Jammû's Ranbireshwar temple for the better part of the decade. It has since returned to Srînagar.

#### When to perform the yatra

The most auspicious (and comfortable) time of the year to perform the *yatra* is the month preceding the *Sawan Puranmashi*, better known to the rest of India as Raksha Bandhan. This is the first full moon night of August



(rarely, late July). The routes to the Holy Cave are buried under snow at least nine months a year. So, even theoretically the journey can not be done except in the remaining two or three months. Officially the *yatra* is open almost 33 days before and some 4-5 days after the said full moon night.

**Example:** Date of Raksha Bandhan, 2003: the 12<sup>th</sup> August. Therefore, the date of the first *darshan*: the 12<sup>th</sup> July. The first batch will leave Pahalgâm three days before the date of the first *darshan* (9 or 10 July in this case). The last batch will return two or three days after the last *darshan* (in this case on the 15<sup>th</sup> August).

### *The routes*

There are two pilgrims' routes to the Holy Cave: the popular, relatively easy, but time consuming trek that begins near Pahalgâm, and the more difficult 'same day return' trip from Bâltal. The Chharhi Mubarak (the Holly Mace) is carried along an extended version of the Pahalgâm route.

(The figure given after the name of a place in Column 1 represents the distance, in kilometres, from the place last mentioned.)

The route of the Chharhi mubarak	The ritual name of the place is said to be	The name of the pilgrimage(s) connected with this place
Srinagar 0		
Shrahuyar/Shuhrayur 8	Shorhash	Shorhash
Pâmpore 4	Shivpuri/ Padampur	Mâd-dein/ Bhagwati Ganga
Barsu/ Barus 9	Vareesh	Rudra Ganga
Jab Bâri (-)	Yuvati	Mishtod/ Mithvanya
Awantipore 4 (from Barsu)	Bântipur	
Mahanag 2	Mihimag	
Hariparigam 5		Haridwar Ganpati
Bahiyar Shetar 2	Balihâr	
Hastigan (-)	Hastikarn	Nâg Ashram; there's a Ganpati called Jyesth Aasharh near the Sangam
Devkyar 4 (from Bahiyar)	Devak Dhâr	Devak
Bijbehera 2	Vijay Vihâr	Hareesh Chandra; the temple nearby is of Vrish Dhvaj Maharaj
Salar [Mattan] 17	Surya Ashram	Surya Ganga; the Lambodari river and the Paschim Vâhini Ganga
Seevras (-)	Satkar	Bhadrâg Shram (Bhatoor); Hay Sheersh (Sirhâm); Ashvatar Kshetra; Sarlak (Sabar) with its holy Anant Nag pond
Khaylan village (-)	Khilyâshr	Bâl Khilya area (Kular)
Ganshibal 14 (from Salar)	Ganesh Bal/ Mahavan	
Mamal 2	Mâmaleshwar/ Mâgeshwar	

Contd.



Contd.

Pahalgâm 3	The Bhṛigupati Kshetra	Ranji Van and, later, the Neel Ganga
Chandanwari 16	Sthânu/ Sthânav Ashram (Thâninyu)	River Saraswati
Pissu Top 5		
Wâwjan/ Shesh Nag 7	Vâyû Varjan/ Sisiram Nag	
Hatiyara Talao 3		
Panjtarni 8	Panchtarangini	
Bhairô(n) Ghati pass 2		Dâmareswar Bhairav
Garbh Yoni 16		
Amravati Nadi 2		
Holy Cave 5		

**The pilgrims' Pahalgâm route**

(The first figure after the name of the place gives the distance, in km., from the place last mentioned. The second figure is the altitude, in feet.)

- Pahalgâm 0/ 7,500
- Chandanwari 16/ 9,500
- Pissu Top 3/ 11,500
- Zoji Bal (Jogi Pal) 4/ 11,000
- Naga Koti 3/ 11,500
- Shesh Nag 3/ 12,500
- Wawbal (Warbal) 1/ 12,500
- Maha Gunas Top 2.6/ 14,800
- Pabi Bal (Rabibal) 1.4/ 14,000
- Posh Pathri 1/ 12,500
- Panjtarni 6.6/ 11,500
- S.S. Parhi 3.4/ 12,500
- Holy Cave 3/ 13,500
- (Pahalgâm to the Holy Cave= 48 km.)

Notes: (i) Distances mentioned for the route of the Chharhi Mubarak are as per the 'old route.' The present route is given here as the Pilgrims' Route. The two sets of figures differ somewhat from each other. The Chharhi Mubarak deviates a bit from the pilgrims' route. (ii) Vâv+jan= Wawjan. It literally means 'strong winds.' (iii) Stark naked sadhus would bathe in the *Amravati Nadi* stream and then jump off a cliff. They believed that if they did not die in the process, it was because God wanted them to live. But if they succeeded in dying, as they wanted to, they believed that they would attain *moksh* (salvation). The government has, because of these



suicides, banned the movement of pilgrims in the direction of the Anantnag Nadi. (iv) Mattan, *Jab Bāri*, Khaylan, Seevras and Hastigan were part of an even older route. (At some stage the route went through Salar instead of Mattan.) I have got these additional places on the authority of Pt. Vyas.

### The Pahalgām route

**Day 1:** You should leave Pahalgām early in the morning. Or else your vehicle will get caught in the slow-moving convoy. Your car or bus will take you some 16 kilometres, to a place just short of Chandanwari (9,560/2,895m.). In case you wish to camp there is a rest house and a number of tents are likely to be available.

The trek begins here. You will first walk over a huge ice field and almost immediately thereafter climb one of the steepest inclines that you will encounter during the entire pilgrimage.

Your night halt will be at the stunning Shesh Nag (3,574m.), where there is a huge fresh-water lake made of icy, whitish-green waters. You can camp either at Zojipal or, slightly further ahead, at Wawjan (pron.: wāw-jann). There are pilgrim shelters and a rest house at Wawjan.

Two days before the auspicious *Sawan Purnamashi*, under an almost full moon, this author saw an incredible sight around ten in the night. A few thousand glowing animals swam from the distant end of Lake Shesh Nag towards the end closest to the pilgrims' camp. They swam in formation, swaying (dancing?) as they moved. They took at least twenty minutes to reach our end of the lake and almost equally long to return.

The officers stationed at Shesh Nag, all of them Muslim, informed us that these animals were water snakes and the glow that we saw was that of the *manis* (jewels) on their heads. Now, Shesh Nag also happens to be the name of the famous water-cobra of Hindu mythology. The Hindus believe that after a cobra has lived long enough (a hundred years), it grows a natural *mani* on its hood.

I don't know what the scientific explanation is. I am just telling you what we saw.

Does this happen throughout the year? Perhaps not. The scientific theory is that these snakes hibernate for the rest of the year. Perhaps they come out only during this, the warmest, time of the year. In any case, who knows? For even officials go there only for the 40 days of the *yatra*. In 1998, these sightings were reported only during the five nights before the *Purnamashi* (full moon night).

**Day 2:** You will climb all the way up to the Mahagunas Pass before descending to Panjtarni (12.6 km. from Shesh Nag). Most pilgrims halt there for the night. Even amateur trekkers can make it in five hours. If you start early enough, you can reach Panjtarni by lunch.



After lunch and a brief rest, if you aren't too tired, you can leave your things in your tent at Panjtarni and go over to the Holy Cave (6.4 km. ahead). You can return to Panjtarni by late evening. I always do so. (There is a camp near the Holy Cave, too, where you can spend the night. However, it is very cold and crowded.)

Between Panjtarni and the Holy Cave (3,962m.) there is an extremely steep climb called S.S.Parhi (for Sher Singh Parhi).

**Day 3:** You can return from Panjtarni to Pahalgâm the way you came. In that case you will return on the fourth or fifth day (depending on whether you had visited the Holy Cave on the second or third day).

Or you can climb up the S.S.Parhi once again and thereafter proceed, mostly downhill, to Bâltal, thus completing the yatra in just three days. This is what I do. (It is 48 km from Pahalgâm to the Holy Cave.)

### The Bâltal route

This route is recommended only to those who are truly fit and in a hurry. For this you should drive from Srinagar (or wherever) to Sonamarg the day before the trek. Spend the night at Sonamarg or, better still, at Bâltal, where a large pilgrim camp would have been set up. Buses, cars and jeeps go all the way to Bâltal. (You have to first drive from Sonamarg on the National Highway in the direction of the dZoji La/ Ladâkh. Two roads branch off from the highway to the right. Both lead to Bâltal. The first of these is not in a good condition for vehicles, but is recommended for trekkers. After you have driven 9 km. from Sonamarg, you will come to a point called Rangâ. The second side road branches off to the right from here. The road is rough. Bâltal is 4.5 km. from Rangâ.

From Bâltal it is a very steep, mostly uphill, seven to nine-hour journey to the Holy Cave. The return takes only a little less. So, if you leave Bâltal at four in the morning, allowing for an hour or two at the Holy Cave of Sri Amarnâth ji, you can be back at Bâltal by ten or eleven that night. The slope can be dangerously slippery on the way back.

Personally, I prefer taking the picturesque Pahalgâm route to the Holy Cave and the shorter Bâltal route for the return journey.

### Where to stay

The choice along the route is between tents pitched by the public sector and tents of the unorganised private sector. During the yatra, tents and kitchens are set up by private as well as public agencies at the four important halts (Chandanwari, Shesh Nag, the holy cave itself and Bâltal). You can expect to rent a bed (and, often, blankets or sleeping bags) in a six-or eight-bed tent for a nominal fee. (1999 rates were: Rs.45 per bed at Chandanwari, Rs.60 at the Holy Cave, and prices in between at the halts en route.)



Free cooked food, too, is available at all the important halts. Charitable organisations from Haryana, the Punjab and Delhi vie with one another to serve free vegetarian meals and snacks to all pilgrims. Except that these meals are soaked in pure ghee (or vegetable oil), they taste very good. As a result, food stalls that charge for the food that they serve have been driven out of business.

*How to get there:* Those who are unable to climb mountains, but want to do the yatra all the same, can hire ponies. These ponies are hardly inexpensive because they have to be fed and maintained throughout the year for a 40-day yatra. The very old and the infirm tend to hire *palanquins* that are even more expensive. Helicopter services started in 2003.

### Medical facilities

Special dispensaries are set up at the two roadheads, Pahalg  m and B  ltal. Considering the circumstances, the facilities are quite good and include X-ray machines. There are male doctors at the major halts, (Shesh Nag, Panjtarni and Chandanwari). They are available for (free) consultation and advice. They also have some (free) medicines: naturally never enough considering that more than two-thirds of the pilgrims actually consult at least one of these doctors.

### Dangers

If you are even slightly unfit you should trek these mountains very carefully because a very large number of people tend to throw up at those high altitudes. There is no escaping sunburn either. As I learnt the hard way, a cap, sunglasses, full-sleeved shirts, vaseline and sunscreen lotion are a must.

Around 25,000 pilgrims tend to visit each of the five government-run medical camps along the route every year. Some of them have serious ailments. Every year one or two pilgrims (out of a total of almost 1,90,000) die during the journey, because of the strain. In years when there are snowstorms the death toll is much higher. Internationally, there are upper-age (and obesity) limits for people who want to climb such high mountains. Attempts to even suggest that the old and unfit should not perform this yatra have wilted under the wrath of the system. At the very least yatris should not come in rubber bathroom slippers and thin cotton clothes, as almost half of them do. It can be very cold at night: close to zero at some of the camps.

In 1928, there was a major natural disaster, perhaps unseasonal snowfall, at Aastan Marg and Hadiyahara Talao (lit.: the murderous pond). Several pilgrims died. Between August 22 and 24, 1996, heavy rains and unexpected snow trapped thousands of pilgrims and their porters. As many as 173 of them died because of the cold, the stampede and by slipping off slopes. While unforeseen snowstorms can not be prevented, panic can perhaps be. In 2000, 2001 and 2002, armed terrorists killed some pilgrims.



### Tips

The pilgrimage is strenuous even from the Pahalgâm side. You have to climb up to the Mahagunas pass (14,400'), which is as high as the highest peak in Europe. Therefore, the old, the infirm and the very young (under 12) are advised not to undertake the pilgrimage at all. Besides, the entire Bâltal route is meant only for the truly fit.

Don't let me scare you, though. Lots of unfit, middle-aged people do the trek from the Pahalgâm side every year. However, do get yourself examined medically.

You might like to go up to the Holy Cave by the gentler, three-day, Pahalgâm route, and come down by the shorter, steeper, seven-hour Bâltal route.

Night temperatures along the route are close to zero. So please bring adequate woollens along. Even if you skip gloves, carry woollen socks and a warm cap. If it is sunny, during the day you'll just need a T-shirt, but stick to a full-sleeved shirt to avoid sunburn.

Try to stay close to the pony that carries your supplies and luggage.

Don't walk faster than your body can take.

In 1996, one of the government servants employed along the route was killed when an explosive device (planted by terrorists) went off.

### Religious lore connected with the places en route

#### *The darshan/Holy Cave*

Pt. Basantlal Vyas of Mathura, writing perhaps in the 1990s, promises that, 'Humans become like immortal Gods just by looking at [i.e. by a *darshan* of] the Amrawati. Bathe in the *amrit* [loosely: ambrosia/ nectar]-like waters [of the Amrawati 'river']. Smear ash on your body. Your body will become white because of the holy ash. Now climb the hill of Lord Amarnâth either naked or wrapped in *bhoj patra* [birch bark]. Dance as you climb and enter the Amarnâth Cave.'

Today-since at least the 1950s-only the naked sadhus do this, not the common man. However, apparently this was not always so.

A 19th century British account describes the scene thus, '[The pilgrims perform] their ablutions in the *Am[a]r Veyut* [the Amrawati], the stream which flows at the bottom; the men divest themselves of all clothing, and enter the cave either entirely naked, or with pieces of birch-bark, which do duty for fig leaves. The women content themselves for the most part with laying aside all superfluous articles of clothing, and shrouding themselves in a long sheet or blanket.' (The *Gazetteer*.)



Elsewhere, Pt. Vyas warns, 'Those who wear impure clothes or do not pray or do not donate money during the *darshan* are consigned to hell. Those who do not smear themselves with holy ash during the *darshan* become lepers in future births.' I hope he is exaggerating. Because I don't recall smearing myself with ash during any of my numerous *darshans*.

***Kular/ Khaylan—the Bâl Khilya pilgrimage***

In ancient times, the celibate Bâl Khilya saints decided to please God by undertaking a very difficult prayer. For thousands of years they prayed, standing on their big toes, eating nothing and controlling not only their actions but also their desires. Lord Vishnu was, indeed, pleased. He appeared before the saints, who emerged from deep prayer and bowed before the Lord. They requested Lord Vishnu to create a pilgrimage where they could obtain *siddhi* (a form of salvation; literally, 'perfection').

Lord Vishnu touched the ground with his big toe. The Bhagwati Ganga, a river, emerged from the spot that he had thus touched. This area is, therefore, known to the devout as the Narayan pilgrimage as well.

***Mamal—the Mâmaleshwar pilgrimage***

There once lived a devotee of Lord Shiva, a man called Mâmlak. His prayer so impressed Lord Shiva that the Lord decided to live at the place that is now called Mamal. After a while Lord Shiva decided to move on. On his way he rested for a spell at Saint Dandak's hermitage, which is above Khilnak. Some angels saw him there and came down to meet him.

Lord Shiva cried out to the angels, 'Mâ! Mâ!' (Don't [come here]! Don't [come here]!) Lord Ganpati, who lived in Pâtâl, the Hindu Hades, emerged from beneath the ground on hearing the words, 'Mâ! Mâ!' The angels, too, immersed themselves in the words 'Mâ! Mâ!' and attained salvation. That is how this place came to be called Mâmal.

Lord Shiva then appointed Lord Ganesh the guardian of the two courtyards here.

***The story of River Lambodari***

Once when Lord Shiva and the Goddess Parvati were still on Mount Kailash they wanted to converse undisturbed. So they asked Lord Ganesh and Nandi to guard the door and screen out all unwelcome visitors.

In those days, Tripurasur, a demon, had been terrorising the angels (*devtās*). So, led by Lord Indra, the angels came to meet Lord Shiva. Lord Ganesh stopped them from going in. This offended Indr, the rain god, who started lashing at him with thunderbolts and lightning. Lord Ganesha reacted by merely growling. That was enough to paralyse one of Indra's arms.

Indr knew that he had erred. He bowed before Lord Ganesh and started chanting melodious prayers in a praise of the elephant-headed deity. Ganesh



was pleased. He forgave Indr and set his arm right. Indr returned to the land of angels.

However, all that anger and growling made Lord Ganesh feel very hungry and thirsty. So he ate a lot of fruit and drank up the entire Ganges. This caused his belly to swell enormously. When Lord Shiva emerged from his chamber he noticed that the Ganges had dried up. He prodded Ganesh's stomach with his hand-held, double-headed drum.

This caused a river to start flowing from Lord Ganesh's stomach. The ancients knew the river variously as the Lambodari and the Lambodari Ganga. It is said that if a person bathes in this river, all his sins get cleansed.

#### *Pahalgām—the Bhrigupati pilgrimage*

In ancient times there was a maharishi, a great saint, called Bhrigu. He went to the Parisheelan forest to pray. His prayer was so intense that after Bhrigu had been at it for a thousand years, Lord Vishnu, accompanied by other Gods, appeared before the saint.

Bhrigu was so overjoyed that he began repeating a prayer in praise of Vishnu and bowing repeatedly before the Lord. Bhrigu's devotion pleased Sri Vishnu. He clasped the saint against his chest. As they did so, a drop of sweat rolled down from their bodies and fell in the Parisheelan forest.

Pahalgām, called the Land of Bhrigu by some, is said to have been created where that drop fell.

#### *The Ranjanopal and the Neel Ganga*

(Ranjanopal must be the woods just before Chandanwari and the Neel Ganga the river that flows there.)

**Ranjanopal:** Lord Ram, Sri Lakshman and Sita ji passed through these woods during their 14-year exile. When demons suddenly appeared before the Lord, he broke into a sweat. Drops of Sri Ram's sweat dropped to the ground and created holy pools here. He then killed the demons. The little hillocks of this region turned red because of the demons' blood. The parts that Sri Ram walked on became green.

**The Neel Ganga:** Lord Shiva's lips once touched Goddess Parvati's eyes. The kohl on her eyes blackened the Lord's lips. So he washed them with the water of the Holy Ganges. This caused the waters that he had rinsed his lips with to grow dark. It was thus that the river here came to be called 'the Blue Ganges.'

#### *Chandanwari—the Sthānv Aashram*

It is said that it was in these chandan (sandalwood)-like woods that the Goddess Parvati worshipped Lord Shiva, her future husband, through severe, self-denying prayer and meditation. At times, being all alone in these woods would scare Parvati ji. However, the Lord was so deeply lost in his own meditation that he wasn't even aware of the Goddess' prayers.



### *Pissu Ghati—the Peshnâkhya hill*

Once the angels and the demons decided to go to the mountains for a *darshan* (glimpse) of the Divine Couple, Shiva and Parvati. Each group wanted to be the first to climb the hill. This resulted in a battle between the gentle angels and the ferocious demons. The frightened angels started praying to Lord Shiva for protection. Lord Shiva bestowed his blessings on the angels. This enabled them to grind the demons to dust. The dust piled up into a huge heap that was known to the ancients as the Peshnâkhya hill and to us as the Pissu Ghati.

### *The Shesh Nag*

Angels from the Siddh and Gandharv clans once went on a pilgrimage to Sri Amarnâth ji. There was a demon that had, through prayer, grown enormously powerful and arrogant. He could become like the wind. So, he started scattering the angels about.

The angels, led by Indra, went to Lord Shiva for his protection. The Lord agreed that the demon was behaving wickedly. But, he told the angels, he had given the demon a boon, therefore he could not destroy him. So, could they go to Lord Vishnu instead?

They did. Lord Vishnu came over with all his weapons. He also persuaded Shesh Nâg, the lord of the serpents, to come over from *Pâtâl* (the Hindu Hades). Shesh Nag has the power to swallow the wind. Therefore, Lord Vishnu gave Shesh Nag the task of eating up the wind-like demon, then and for all times to come.

Parts of the Amarnâth Yatra route are prone to very, almost devilishly, strong winds. I have been to the Shesh Nag area four times and each time it was calm. Perhaps it always remains so. Hence the legend that the Shesh Nag had devoured the winds. Incidentally, Nâg means 'snake' as well as 'lake.' So there's a pun hidden in the name.)

### *Wâwjan—the Vâyu Varjan pilgrimage*

After the angels had killed most of the demons, an ogre called *Prishtat* teamed up with the winds to torment the angels. (Yet another reference to the winds' torment.) Lord Shiva told the angels that if they were to build a little hermitage of stones, the stones would stop the winds. The angels did so and were able to live there peacefully—for a while.

One day the ogre decided to bother them again. Lord Indra, the Chief of the angels, killed the demon with a thunderbolt (*vajra*). Since then the place has been known as the *Vâyu* (wind) *Varjan* pilgrimage.

### *The Hatiyara Talab/ Talao (pond)*

The few demons that survived the onslaughts of the Lords Shiva and Indra began to trouble the angels, as well as the saints who had gone there to meditate. The Goddess Parvati asked her husband to help the angels and the



saints. Lord Shiva called out in anger. His voice frightened the demons, who turned themselves into fish and other water animals and sought refuge in this pond. Lord Shiva was unhappy that the pond had given protection to beings that had caused pain to saints. Therefore, he caused the pond to dry up. The demons ran away.

Pilgrims are expected to be silent when they pass this waterless pond. *Hatiyara* means 'murderous.'

### *The Panjtarni*

Once when Lord Shiva was performing the Tândav dance his top knotted hair got loosened. The Ganges, which lives in that topknot, flowed down to the ground in the form of five (panj) streams. Together they are known to the devout as the Panjtarni Ganga.

### *The immortal Lord Amaresh and the Amravati river*

While Planet Earth was being created, the angels, including Lord Indra, turned into mortals. Now even they had to die someday. This made them panic. They went to Lord Shiva and begged him to make them immortal once again.

Lord Shiva promised the frightened angels, 'I will protect you from the fear of death.' He pulled Amâ, the crescent moon, out of his top-knotted hair and squeezed it. Amrit, the nectar that makes immortal all those who drink it, began to flow out. This jet of amrit went on to become the Amravati river. Some drops fell on the Lord's chest, dried up and then dropped to the ground. These became the ice lingam in the Holy Cave. The lingam is variously known as Lord Amaresh, Lord Amareshwar and Lord Amarnâth. Lord Shiv said, 'Whoever looks at my lingam in the (holy Amarnâth) cave will stop dreading death.' The Lord also caused Amâ, the crescent moon, to eclipse from *amâvasya* (the new moon night) to the full moon night.

'Amar' means 'immortal.' The word 'amrit' is derived from 'amar.' 'Nath' means 'Lord/ master.' The lingam at the Holy Cave is said to guard people from death and grant them salvation. Therefore, it came to be called Amarnâth. However, the same legend also says that the words 'Amarnâth,' 'Amareshwar' etc., are derived from Amâ, the crescent moon, and not Amar.

### *The pigeons in the Holy Cave*

Lord Shiva was once engrossed in dance. Two of his disciples, who were jealous of each other, started quarrelling. Their pigeon-like cackling disturbed the Lord's concentration. He decreed that the disciples would be converted into pigeons forever. They would live in the holy Amarnâth cave and their cackling would rid pilgrims of all their troubles.



If pilgrims say 'Jai!' ('Glory!') when they see the pigeons in the Holy Cave, they become 'somewhat like Lord Shiva.' To return from the Cave without having seen the pigeons is to 'betray the pilgrimage.'

### *The 'Muhammad' mountain*

The Amarn  th Yatra takes places today because a Kashmir   Muslim family re-discovered the cave. God clearly willed that the place be dear to both the Hindus and the Muslims. If you stand at the Holy Cave, with your back to the cave, and look at the tall rocky mountain directly in front of it, you will notice a natural pattern in the grains of the rocks.

Just below the peak, on the right is a dark cave-like depression. A very, very thick band travels from the cave to the left, horizontally. The colour of this band is lighter than that of the rocks above and below it. It consists of several horizontal lines, parallel to each other, like lines in sheet music. It is as if some divine hand ran its fingers on this rock, first horizontally and then diagonally, within this band. And as the hand moved, the fingers left their mark behind.

When the band finishes its horizontal, leftward (eastward) travel, it comes down diagonally, i.e. rightward/ westward, for a short while. It then goes down diagonally to the left till it almost touches the ground. From there it makes another circle. It then travels up, east/leftward, at a gentle angle towards a dry nallah and then to the rocky mountain on the left. From there it comes down in a curve, leftward, towards the ground.

The band is too thick and, because of its colour, too distinct to miss: or to be wishful thinking. The parallel lines travel horizontally and then go up and down along with the band.

Seen from the Holy Cave, the band spells 'Muhammad' in Arabic. By placing this mountain on the other side of the river from the Holy Cave, with a gorge in between, God seems to have ensured that even in the distant future there will be no room for conflict. Indeed, the divine signal seems to be that this place is holy for everyone, regardless of religion.

### *Flora and fauna*

**Wildlife:** Marmots are the real inhabitants of the area. It's just that this shy creature probably goes into hiding when the place is overwhelmed by thousands of pilgrims, who travel in an almost non-stop procession throughout the daylight hours. After the yatra is over the marmots come out in bigger numbers than perhaps anywhere else in the state. Butterflies and rare birds, too, are best seen before or after the yatra.

In 1981, Gp. Capt. J.S. Kahlon was flying a helicopter over the stretch that leads to the dZoji La. He says that when he flew over a lake (which is not on the pilgrim route) he spotted a *Yeti* (abominable snowman). The human-like creature ran into a cave when he saw the chopper.



**Herbs and flowers:** If you climb up from Chandanwari, then after Mahagunas you will come to Posh Pathri ('flower-stone'). Some flowers grow there with an odour so strong that horses faint on smelling it. Therefore, the owners of horses and ponies always pull their steeds away from this patch. The more experienced horses and ponies avoid it on their own.

Jogi Bâdshâh ('the hermit-emperor') is the king of medicinal herbs as far as the Bakerwâl tribals are concerned. This is a flower that grows only on mountains that are so high and difficult to climb that 'the voice of no woman or dog can reach or be heard there, only Allah's voice.' Its extract is said to cure diabetes and 'stomach ailments' (mainly dyspepsia and acidity). It is also presented as a gift to important people, because of its rarity. The flower has five to ten spots that look like eyes. Therefore, even educated Bakerwâls consider it a 'living creature' (i.e. an animal). They believe that the flower can see people. When they cut the flower from its stem they place a tiny lump of salt on the stem at the place where the flower had been. They believe that if this is not done it will rain even on a sunny day. The flower is found in the nearby Sârbal mountain and Nîl Grâth (near Sonamarg).

Patrees (known as Pivak to the Kashmîris) is a bitter-tasting herb that is used in Western medicines. Pickers are paid Rs.2000 for every kilogram (2001 rates). In the market it fetches several times that. It grows throughout the Tilel-Sonamarg belt.

Chhindî/dubbâ is a fibre that dealers from Delhi and Amritsar buy from here. They pay Rs.4,000 for every quintal of the dried stuff. It is used in the manufacture of cloth and cloth-based shoes. If you climb from Sangam to the Holy Cave (from the Baltal side), then just before the final climb look at the mountain across the rivulet. The whitish patches on it are chhindis.

#### *Other Amarnâths*

The Buddha Amarnâth of Poonch (Jammû) is already quite popular. There is definitely a similar Shivling in a cave at Domel on the Raman Nalah (stream) in Tilail (Bârâmulâ). It is not as tall as its counterpart at Amarnâth, and melts faster. There is a belief that there is an ice shivling in Zâñskâr (Ladâkh), too. Someday I hope to verify this legend for myself.

#### *Modern developments*

In October 2000, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammû & Kashmir, enacted a legislation to create the Sri Amarnâthji Shrine Board, on the lines of the hugely successful Sri Mata Vaishno Devi ji Shrine Board. This author had the honour of drafting the bill and being appointed the founding-Chief Executive Officer of the Board. I am in the process of trying to create permanent camps for the *yatra*, and am trying to get non-government organisations to augment the infrastructure.



## The Cave Temple of Lord Shiv

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**The discovery:** In August 2001, I received a 6-page letter in which an audacious assertion had been made. One Haji Muhammad Rafique Bocken claimed that his son-in-law, Ghulam Quadir, had seen a cave temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. This was in a valley close to the Holy Cave of Shri Amarnâth ji. The Haji and Quadir are both nomadic Bakerwâls. And yet the letter had been composed on a computer. The English used was posh. Above all, the photographs appended had been taken with an advanced camera, then scanned into a computer and printed out with a high-resolution printer.

The Haji had mailed copies of the letter to a dozen top-ranking officials in Delhi and Srinagar. The whole thing looked too suspicious to be true. No wonder one of these officers noted in the margin of the letter, 'Too suspiciously sophisticated.'

Despite my own doubts I decided to check the claim out. The Haji's clan spends its summers near Chandanwari (Kashmîr) and winters in Jindrah (Jammû). I asked my staff in Jammû and Pahalgâm to look for him. We finally established contact.

**The cave:** The cave-temple is just above the treeline. It is located in a rocky portion of a medium-sized meadow that is now being called Shiva Marg. It is a natural cave but slabs of rock have been placed atop its entrance. They might be man-made. There are at least three caves within the main cave.

The first cave is quite shallow. The light inside is dim but more than enough to shoot crisp TV images with. It is less than twenty feet deep, around ten feet high and around fifteen feet wide. As soon as we entered, we saw a whitish stone idol, a bust of Lord Shiva, which was a little more than a foot high. Over the centuries it had been much eroded by the elements. There were no winds or dripping water inside the cave when we went there. And yet both seem to have been responsible for the weathering of the idols.



Despite the blurring of details on the main idol, certain things were clearly visible: Shivji's top-knot, the cobra (Nâg Devatâ) coiled around his neck and a hump on his other shoulder (probably a trishul/ trident). Some of the deity's facial features could be seen.

There were more than a dozen Shivlings near this idol. The oval tops of most of them had been sliced off quite neatly. Their tops were, thus, almost flat. As much as two-thirds of many of the Shivlings had been eroded. You can tell this from the shape of what is left. In one or two cases dripping water was definitely the culprit. This was obvious from the way the tops had been eroded. Only one Shivling in the first cave was fully intact. TV footage of this lingam does not do justice to its excellent state of preservation, because it receives less natural light than the others. It is protected from the winds by another whitish idol, the features of which have been blurred even more.

All these idols and lingams have been carved out of a natural, raised platform, around five or six feet higher than the ground. To reach the platform one has to climb up a rock. The Shrî Amarnâth jî Shrine Board can get steps carved into this rock after expert archæologists give their go-ahead.

Could Haji Rafique have brought these idols over from elsewhere to con us all?

No way. The idols are all fixed to the rock below. Indeed, they have been carved out of that rock, which is rooted to the ground. Besides, the weathering is too obvious to have been faked.

When we enter the first cave, then to its right (east) there's another, smaller cave. Actually it is a narrow extension of the first cave. It is next to a 'ventilator': an opening that lets in lots of light and air. The opening looks man-made. Or it could be a natural opening fortified by men with a stone shaft. One has to crawl up a rock to get to this level, which is about three feet higher than 'Cave 1'.

There was another idol in this cave. It was covered with algæ. Therefore, it is difficult to say if the algæ created the elephant's trunk that could be seen, or a sculptor did. The top-knotted head and humps on the shoulders, on the other hand, suggested that this, too, was a bust of Lord Shiva—and not that of his son, Lord Ganesha. Next to it was a Shivling, the second best preserved one in the complex. Both were rooted to the rock below. In an alcove behind them was a loose idol, its features having been eroded beyond recognition. The idols near the ventilator had been worn out the most. They alone had algæ. This was because they were the closest to the winds, the sun and rain/snow, because of the nearby ventilator.

I found plenty of what looked like ashes and partially burnt wood/ stone at this level. Perhaps religious ceremonies had been performed there. I also found the flat bone of a buffalo there. I thought it might have been used



to scrape things with. Haji Rafique said that a bear that had killed a buffalo would probably have left it there.

To the left of the first cave is a third, dark cave. It is extremely deep, as we discovered by stabbing the air with our walking sticks. We did not have the equipment to explore this slim, tall but deep cave. Who knows what lies inside: nothing, more idols or a Shiva Khorī-style hall.

Water trickles through this cave. Run your hands along its ceiling and they will be filled with a whitish, lime-like paste. The Bakerwāls, who are extremely analytical about all natural phenomena, say that rocks get reduced to a paste only after water has run over them for a few thousand years.

**The Amrit Kund:** The idols in the cave-temple had been eroded considerably. Only two lingams had their oval tops intact. Therefore, I left the cave-temple with mixed feelings. I was convinced that Haji Rafique had not conned us. But I was still wondering about how much of the cave, the idols and the lingams was man-made and how much had been shaped thus by the winds.

The Amrit Kund was the clincher.

This is a perennial spring some 250 metres from the cave-temple. It is located on the bed of a seasonal nallah. When the snows melt, their water comes hurtling down the nallah, bringing down loose stones, rocks and other debris.

The crystal-clear waters of this spring are stored for a while inside a man-made stone-trough. When we went there, the water inside it was about an inch deep and rested on a bed of sand and pebbles. However, the texture of the trough made me suspect that its bottom was made of chiselled rock, and not sand. So I got two members of our party to dig the sand out. When they had done so we found a neatly carved, man-made stone-trough. It is  $7\frac{1}{4}$ " high. Its front is about 19" long and its left and right sides are 16" each.

It has only three sides. Which means that it has no back at all. This could be because the back fits into the mountainside and is thus not needed. Or the back could have got eroded by the centuries of water going down that way. The water then turns left (west). As a result, the left side of the trough has also got eroded considerably.

The best part is that the entire trough has been carved out of a single rock, as at, say, Nārā Nāg in Srinagar district (2nd century B.C.-A.D. 8th century). The lower halves of the inner surfaces of the trough have diagonal striations. This kind of stone carving is done at Pantha Chuk, near Srinagar City, to this day.

The upper halves of the three sides are about an inch and a half thick. That is rather thin for sides made of stone. It is easier for the stoneworker to create thick sides than thin ones. Besides, there is no advantage in creating thin sides.



These sides have clearly been eroded to their present thinness over the centuries. Originally, they were at least  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " thick each. Portions of the trough that have not been eroded as badly indicate this.

This *kund* (tank) has a tiny outlet in the front. This is typical of all *yonis* on which a lingam is placed in Shiva temples. In normal *yonis* this slit is exactly in the middle. Here the slit is near the right corner of the main, front 'wall.' As I mentioned, water flows naturally to the left, and not through this slit in the front. Therefore, it is man-made and is not the result of erosion. Besides, it is shaped too neatly like a 'U' to be natural.

If there is a *yonī*, the lingam can not be far behind. I am confident that the lingam of this *yonī* lies buried in the nallah below, under several centuries of rubble. Our group found a flat stone on which some religious figures had once been carved. Such flat stones with figures are common around the wells and springs of Jammū. I could not make out what these particular figures might have been. The Haji spotted a trishul, though.

**The routes:** There are three possible routes to the cave-temple. All three originate on the motorable Pahalgām-Chandanwārī road, a short distance before we reach Chandanwārī. (All 'Km.-points' are counted from Pahalgām, which is 16 km. from Chandanwārī. Thus 'Km.13' is three km. or less before Chandanwārī and 'Km.15' one km. or less before Chandanwārī.)

- i) *From the bridge* just before the shops at Chandanwārī ('Km.15'): This route is around 5 km. long. However, it is the steepest and the most difficult. Therefore, it is not recommended for most *yatris*, though the Bakerwāls use it.
- ii) *From the 'camping site'* just before Chandanwārī (also 'Km. 15'): This route, too, is 4.5 or 5 km. long. It took us an hour and fifty minutes to climb up from the Chandanwārī 'camping site' to the cave temple. It is a very steep route. The gradient exceeds  $60^\circ$  for long stretches. It is  $45^\circ$  in many, if not most, of the other stretches. The first stretch is grassy and treeless. It is possible to climb up this stretch on ponies. We then enter a shaded section, which is a dense kail forest. The next set of woods is a budlū-chīr forest. The gradient gets gentle at a 'saddle top' called Hapatgand. After that there is an exquisite and dense *burzā* (bhoj patr) forest. The last section, where the cave temple is located, is treeless. It is a sharply sloping meadow with three sets of rocks. The cave temple is in the middle set.
- iii) *From Kud (or Kurh) Pathri* ('km. 13'): This is the longest route: about 6 or 7 km. But it also has the gentlest gradient. It took us 65 minutes to descend from the cave temple to the main road by this route. Routes ii and iii meet up at Hapatgand. Between the main road and Hapatgand we pass through a very dense kail



forest. There are pine needles on the ground, which makes it slippery. All the same it is possible to travel by pony from the main (Pahalgâm-Chandanwârî) road right up to the cave temple, using this route. The uphill journey takes a little more than three hours, on pony or foot. At present there is a rough track made by some Bakerwâls. Engineers present with us said that if they were to make a proper track, it would be around 12-13 km. long.

**Hapatgand:** 'Hapat' means 'bear.' Black and brown bears are found in this area. This is a 'saddle' on either side of which is a valley. The Pahalgâm valley is in the west. Route iii, too, is to the west. In the east are Chandanwârî, Pissu Top, Zojipal and the Shesh Nag hill. The Dodal mountain is in the south. (Warwan in Jammû province lies beyond Dodal.) Route ii is to the south. The cave-temple is a little more than a kilometre uphill, northwards, from here. Hapatgand is at a higher altitude than Pissu Top (11,500').

**The altitude of the cave temple:** The temple and the *kund* are much higher than Pissu Top. Therefore, they would be at around 12,500'. From both you can see Dodal and the Phirisilan Top. Haji Rafique had warned us that there was very little oxygen up there. However, this was not obvious.

**Weather and clothing:** Despite a blazing sun, it was unwise to have worn only a shirt. Even in the lower reaches of that hill, close to the main road, we felt the cold sharply as sweat evaporated.

**Antiquity:** This style of sculpture ceased around the 13th century A.D. Its oldest specimens, on the other hand, date to the early centuries of the Christian era. Therefore, the cave-temple and the *kund* could be anywhere between eight and fifteen hundred years old. The ASI will be able to put a more precise date.

The Kashmîrî Pandits have always said that the holy Shrî Amarnâth jî cave was mentioned in ancient scriptures, that for a few thousand years it had got lost and then Âdâm Malik rediscovered it. (My calculations, based on the Maliks' family tree, put Adam's discovery at between A.D. 1750 and 1775.) The Malik family, too, only claimed to have rediscovered the cave. That way both the priests and the Maliks could give the cave and the *Yatra* an antiquity that goes back to well before 1775.

The discovery of the cave temple at Shiva Marg/ Hapatgand proves that the Amarnâth *Yatra* and the sanctity of the Holy Shrî Amarnâth jî Cave date to several centuries, perhaps a thousand years, before 1750.

**Accessibility:** The cave temple is accessible nine months a year. Therefore, if thrown open to the public, it will be very good for the economy of the Phirisilan area and the Bakerwâls who camp there. Already both communities are very excited about the discovery.



Was the temple part of an ancient Shri Amarnâth jî route? There can be no doubt that it was. A straight road and then a 2½ km. uphill, oxygen-deprived climb leads to Âstân-marg. After that it is a descent all the way to Posh Pathri/ Kêl Nâr, which is 3 km. before Panjtarni. This route takes the Bakerwâls around 4 hours, other good climbers 6 hours and the general *yatri* 8 hours. Therefore, this ancient route is somewhat shorter than the present one.

Besides, since the cave temple is snowless and accessible for more than nine months a year, it was clearly a base camp. A *kund*, even if a small one, was created at the spring. There was no real need to do so because it is quite convenient to collect water directly from the spring. The *kund* indicates that a large number of people used it, and not just some stray sadhus. Secondly, this is the only ancient or even mediæval temple ever found on the Shri Amarnâth jî route. Therefore, this must have been the base camp, where prayers were offered before the main *yatra*.

**Postscript:** In 2003, the state government took the first step towards throwing the cave-temple open to tourists<sup>1</sup>. It ordered the building of a 'pony track' from the Chandanwari road to the temple. Our team revisited the temple in June 2003 to inspect the works that had been done till then. These included the aforementioned track for ponies to walk (and carry pilgrims) on, a helipad at Hapatgand (for helicopters, with affluent pilgrims, to land on), a metal gate to secure the entrance of the cave and a grill for its large ventilator (to prevent animals and miscreants from walking in) and a platform outside the cave for pilgrims to sit on. The publisher of this book (Mr. Vivek Garg) and some photographers accompanied us.

This visit revealed the changes that had been made in the cave in the two years following its discovery. Some of these were painful and some were fresh insights. But this time we also made a sensational new discovery.

The painful parts first. Some idiots had smeared saffron paint on all the idols and lingams. Even before this act of vandalism one had to stare very hard at the wind-eroded idols to be able to make out Lord Shiv's features or Lord Ganesh' trunk. With the saffron paint it has become even more difficult to do so. This is like going to the rock temples of Andhra, Tamil Nadu or Cambodia and painting those priceless idols saffron. This is also against the Hiñdû tradition according to which Lord Shiv is never painted saffron. He is blue in most parts of the country, white in Kashmir, Jammû City and some of the Konkans and the natural colour of rock in most parts of India and South East Asia. Lingams are normally granite-grey, black or marble-white. I have ordered the cleansing of all the vandalised idols and lingams with mineral water back to their natural colour. However, till the

<sup>1</sup> Till then it had not been possible to do so for reasons of security.



time of going to the press we had not succeeded in removing the saffron completely.

Businessmen had pasted plastic stickers all over. Some people had carved their names on those ancient rocks. But the most heartbreaking part was yet to come. That priceless *kund* (kitchen-sink sized stone basin) had been broken into two. It can be repaired but the crack will always show. This is the reason why the gate and the grill had to be affixed. Haji Rafique, now as protective of the discovery as the most devout Brāhmin priest, has moved the pieces of the kund to inside the now-gated cave.

But there was good news too. This time we saw a small idol of a Nandi bull near that of Lord Shiv. This leaves no room for doubt about this being a temple of Lord Shiv. Abdul Ahad, the numberdar of Phirisdan, and an enthusiastic member of our original team, has visited the cave several times since its discovery. He noticed that a long snake had been carved on the flat underside of one of the boulders. Wind and water do erode rocks in this manner and give them flat surfaces. However, in this case it seems that some human had planed this shaft flat.

Ahad feels, with some justification, that the boulder must once have stood erect but has since keeled over. It is now parallel to the ground and there is a gap of almost eighteen inches between its underside and the rock below it. It is possible to insert one's head under this shaft and see that long serpent. Even in the evening there was enough light to see it. Rafique and Ahad also pointed to other carvings (apparently of kitchen utensils and Indian-style crockery) on a fallen shaft.

**The 'eternal' ember:** The most startling discovery this time was that of a reddish glow, the size of a small paperweight, two or three feet behind the idol of Lord Ganesh (which is at the uppermost level). There is a small, shallow alcove behind the idol. On the wall of this alcove we saw a glow of a faint-red colour. Everyone's first reaction (it certainly was mine) would be to dismiss this glow as sunlight entering through a hole in the wall. But the sun was not behind that wall. So, our second reaction was that it was sunlight from the large ventilator being bounced back from that wall.

Ahad conducted experiments to test this theory. He covered the ventilator with thick blankets. The glow remained. We have photographed the glow with various amateur cameras, including home video cameras. The reddish glow is clearly seen in all the pictures, even when the other objects in the frame are dark and indistinct.

My theory is that this is some glowing rock, perhaps some kind of coal or lignite, burning slowly. But why did we not notice it on our first visit when we had gone right up to that wall and had spent considerable time there? Either way we seem to be getting a message that this cave temple is a place of exceptional spiritual importance.



## Lord Jesus Christ in Kashmîr and Ladâkh

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A sign outside Rozabal (Khânyân, downtown Srinagar) tells all visitors, in English, that the shrine inside is *not* the tomb of Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly the keepers of the shrine have no interest in attracting tourists by implying that it is-or might be. Nor does the tourist trade of Kashmîr. I am not sure why. In my case, I can not accept that the Lord was buried at Rozabal, because I believe that Jesus died on the cross, was buried, rose on the third day and ascended *bodily* to heaven.

And yet the evidence is too plentiful, too solid, to ignore. Even if we do not concede that Christ died in Srinagar, there seems to be proof of the highest grade that at least he lived in Kashmîr and Ladâkh for a while. That's why the controversy refuses to die.

I have an elaborate theory of 'retrospective visits' by divine persons and prophets to lands where their religion reached several centuries later. Thus, Mauritian Hindus now claim that the Hindu deity Lord Hanuman had flown over their charming island and had established a holy lake there. After Hindu soldiers started going to Ladâkh, legends arose that Hanuman ji had flown over Kargil as well, and that Draupadi ji had bathed near Drass. All Muslims hold the Biblical Solomon in high esteem. Therefore, the tallest hill in Srinagar town has retrospectively become the Koh-e-Suleiman (Solomon's hill), on which his *takht* (throne) is said to have been kept.

### The Islâmic position

Kashmîrî Muslims and Ladâkhi Buddhists have no similar incentive to invent stories about Lord Jesus. The Muslim establishment of Kashmîr neither supports nor is hostile to the idea of Rozabal being Lord Jesus' tomb. This could be because the Holy Quran does not accept that Jesus had died on the cross. ('*And they killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross,*' [4:157].)



On the other hand, Islâm does not oppose the doctrine of bodily ascension to heaven. There are two references in the Holy Quran to this, and both support bodily ascension:

Behold! Allah said:  
 "O Jesus! I will take thee  
 And raise thee to Myself..." (3: 55)  
 and  
 Nay, Allah raised [Jesus] up  
 Unto Himself; and Allah  
 Is Exalted in Power, Wise... (4: 158)

Thus, Islâm officially accepts that Lord Jesus was 'taken up'. Incidentally, even the Bible uses the expression 'taken up into heaven' (Mark 16: 19). Thus, if Christ did not die on the cross, he could have gone to Kashmir after the crucifixion, to live *and* die there. And yet, if he ascended bodily to heaven then he could at best have lived in Kashmir and not died there.

Therefore, researchers like Aziz Kashmirî and Fida Hasnain (both Kashmiris) and Rabbi Dahan Levi (of Morocco and Paris) have dug up evidence *despite* indifference in Kashmir and hostility elsewhere. The Christian establishment is not amused by claims about the existence of a tomb of Lord Jesus Christ. (Nor, as I said, am I. But after my first visit to Rozabal, I was overwhelmed by a presence that I can't explain.)

### The Bhavishya Maha Puran

The clincher is a passage from the Sanskrit *Bhavishya Maha Puran* (lit.: the great scripture about the future), believed to have been written by Vyas in A.D. 115. Thanks to Aziz Kashmirî I have seen the photocopy of a page from the 1910 edition of the book. My first reaction on reading the page was, 'This can't be true. This must be a forgery. Or at least the book wasn't originally written in A.D. 115. This could be a later interpolation.' However, there can be no reason why a Hindu Mahârâjâ should have ordered the printing of a tampered version of an ancient Hindu scripture. Certainly, not to prove that Lord Jesus had lived in Kashmir when there was no advantage in doing so.

The said passage reads, 'There [while in a country in the mountains, Raja Shakewahin] saw [what appeared to be] a Raja of Sakas at Wien, who was fair and wore white clothes. ['Wien' is 18 km. from Srinagar, where the Khrew Cement Factory now is.] He asked the man who he was. His reply was that he was Yushaphat [Yuz Aasaf], and had been born of a woman...

'[The man also said:] "O Raja, when truth had disappeared and there was no limit [to evil practices] in the malechha [infidel] country, I appeared there and through my work the guilty and the wicked suffered, and I too suffered at their hands."



'The Raja asked him what his religion was. He replied, "It is to establish love and truth and to purify one's heart and for this I am called *Isa Masih*." (Emphasis added.)

Aziz Kashmîrî (born 1919) has in his possession a photocopy of this page, taken from the *Bhavishya Maha Puran* (p. 282, ch. iii, sec. II, shloka 9-31, translated by Vidyavaridî Dr. Shiv Nath Shastri). The photocopy and more details about the information contained in this chapter appear in Aziz Kashmîrî's book *Christ in Kashmîr*, Roshni Publications, Srinagar. Its eighth edition was published in 1998.

The Sanskrit text has four incredible references. In verse 22 we are told of 'Ish Putram', the Son of God. The word 'Ish' is suspiciously close to 'Isa,' the Indo-Islâmic version of the name of Jesus Nazarene, known in some Western countries as Jesus Christ.

Two verses later, the speaker says, 'Masiho Ahem', 'I am the messiah'. Verse 25 leaves nothing to the imagination. It begins with the name of 'Isha Maseeh', 'Jesus the Messiah'. Either we have a major forgery here, or a revelation of earth shaking dimensions. If these words were indeed written in A.D. 115, then there can be no doubt that this fair man in white clothes, this son of God, this messiah who calls himself Isha Maseeh, was Lord Jesus himself. Later in the same verse we have another reference to 'Maseeh', this time with a terminal 'h'. Verse 27 mentions 'Maseeha', the messiah, yet again.

'Ish' is the Hindu word for God. So that part can be a coincidence. But the concept of 'messiahs' is unknown to Hinduism. If the above mentioned page 282 of the A.D. 1910 edition is a faithful reproduction of the A.D. 115 original, then no further proof is needed.

And the amount of related evidence that's available is not funny.

### Early Kashmîrî beliefs about Christ-like saints

That a non-Muslim saint or prophet or king ('Sultan') lies buried at Rozabal has always been known. The way the grave has been laid is unIslâmic. (Hazrat Yuz Aasaf's feet face West. The Holy Kâba is West of Kashmîr.) The stone used, the architecture, the impression on stone of a pair of gigantic feet and the decorative motifs in the tomb are all pre-Islâmic: Hindu, to be precise.

But Hindus are cremated, not buried in graves. So this saint-king must have been Jewish or Christian.

The *Rājātaraṅginī* (written 1148-50) took the *Bhavishya Maha Puran*'s account further. There is no question of an interpolation in this very popular book. Too many copies of it have always existed. Besides, it has been translated repeatedly. There are two Persian versions, one ordered by



Kashmir's own King Budshah Zain-ul-Abidin (15<sup>th</sup> century) and the other by the Mughal Emperor Akbar (16<sup>th</sup> century). There also are three English versions (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries).

The *Rājātaraṅgīnī* mentions Sandhimati Arya Raj, the 'greatest of all saints,' as having been a minister in the court of King Jayendra (61 B.C.-A.D. 24). This saint led a life of poverty, was imprisoned for a long while and 'died at the stake'. He was resurrected, after which he 'consented to the prayers of the citizens' and ruled Kashmir for 47 years.

Executing people 'at the stake' is not part of the Indian tradition.

The story of Sandhimati sounds almost as if it were taken right out of the Old Testament. Witness:

'There was a rumour that the time would come when Sandhimati would reign... The king, alarmed at the probable consequences, threw Sandhimati into prison... and intended to execute [him].' (Book II, Page 30)

Shades of Herod and the Pharaoh?

Matthew 27:37 says of the crucified Christ, 'And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is the King of the Jews." '

The *Rājātaraṅgīnī* says about Sandhimati, who had similarly died on a stake: 'But when [Sandhimati's master, Ishana] was going to perform the last ceremony [on Sandhimati], the following lines marked on his forehead by Vidhata [God] caught his eye: "Poverty so long as he lives, ten years' imprisonment, death on a pale, and then kingdom again." ' (Appendix C, page v, Volume I, KOK.)

'Kingdom again' could refer to 'Rex Iudaeorum' or to Jesus' kingdom in heaven, more likely the latter.

Or take these three aspects of the resurrection:

- i) 'Necodemus also, who had at first come to him by night [after Jesus' crucifixion], came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes...' (John 19:39)
- Ishan (a) could not sleep on the night of Sandhimati's crucifixion. 'At midnight... he felt the smell of burning incense...' (KOK, Vol. I, Appendix C, page v.)
- ii) Mary Magdalene 'saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet...' (John 20:12)
- Ishan (a) 'saw Yoginis [female yogis] coming that way with a burning light. They then got hold of [Sandhimati's] skeleton and ran away with it...' (KOK, Vol. I, Appendix C, page v.)



- iii) After Sandhimati had risen from the dead, he went to the town. 'The citizens... at first doubted the identity of Sandhimati, but his speech dispelled their doubts.' (KOK, Vol. I, Appendix C, page vi.)

Didn't Thomas ('the Twin') have similar doubts, too?

Some historians, like Hassan (19<sup>th</sup> century), list Yuz Aasaf among the Muslim saints of Kashmîr.

Sufi, the 20<sup>th</sup> century historian, pooh-poohs the Christ in Kashmîr theory. He says that Yuz Aasaf was merely the Egyptian ambassador at the court of Budshah. Yet, far from clearing up the mystery, Dr. Sufi only adds to it. He points out that the name Yuz Aasaf, if written in the Arabic script, can be read as 'Bodhisattva'. (There is a parallel belief that the 'Maitreya' of Buddhism is the same as the 'Messiah' [and the Mahdi of the Shiites]. So, if Yuz Aasaf was the Bodhisattva, the plot only thickens.)

### The origins of the belief

Christianity was late in coming to most of north India. The British rulers of India did not encourage its spread either. However, after they annexed much of North India (around 1857) at least the religion started looming on the consciousness of the average north-Indian.

The 'Christ came to/ is buried in Kashmîr' theory was first put forward in the mass media through a book entitled *Maseeh Hindustan Mein* (The Messiah in India). It was written around 1899 and published in 1908. Its author was Khalifa Noor-ud-Din of Jalalpur Jattan (district Gujrat, Punjab). He was a member of the then recently established Ahmadiyya Movement. Its founder, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, sent the Khalifa to Srinagar to research the hypothesis that was, till then, limited to folk beliefs and little known manuscripts. As many as 566 people in Kashmîr signed a statement to the effect that (they believed that) Rozabal was the tomb of Lord Jesus.

The book cited Islâmic sources to show that the Lord had travelled to Nasibain, and then through Iran and Afghânistan to Kashmîr. It claimed that the ten lost tribes of Israel had migrated to and settled in Kashmîr (and Afghânistan). It also quoted Buddhist texts which indicated that the Buddha had predicted that five hundred years after his death another Buddha, called *Mitya*, would arise. This name has been widely interpreted by not just the Ahmadiyyas but by countless Hindu and Buddhist scholars as being the same as 'messiah'.

Aziz Kashmîrî writes, '[The said book] also adduces authentic proof that Jesus Christ has been mentioned by the name of *Mi-Shi-Hu* in books written in Tibet during the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.' (The 'said book' is *A record of the Buddhist religion* by I. Tsing.)



Khwaja Nazir Ahmad, a barrister from Lahore, based in England, elaborated on the theme in the 1940s. He claimed to have evidence that Jesus visited Takshashila (Taxila, now in Pakistan), accompanied by 'Judas Thomas'. Apparently Mary (presumably Mother Mary), who was with them, died and was buried at Murree (also in Pakistan). There's a tomb at Murree, known as the *Shrine of Mai (mother) Mari*, who is supposed to have been Mother Mary. It is now being claimed that Murree itself has been named after Mother Mary. *Mari* does sound like Mary, but surely the Mother would have been called Mariam, which isn't quite the same.

(Hasnain and Levi say that the other famous Biblical Mary, Magdalene, was buried at Kashgar in Central Asia.)

The Khwaja added that Lord Jesus then reached Kashmir where he lived and proselytised for 125 years, and where he died and was buried.

In 1953, Aziz Kashmiri published an article citing historical records which indicated that Prophet Moses was buried in a tomb on a reddish mountain near Moab on Nebo Ball (Booth) in Bandipor  .

In 1967, a group of top ranking Kashmiri clerics and leading journalists, including Aziz Kashmiri, went over to Rozabal. They recorded what the people of the neighbourhood, Khanyar, believed about the origins of the shrine. The people, to the last man, were of the view that a Prophet called Yuz Aasaf lay buried in the tomb and that he had come to Kashmir during the reign of Raja Gopand.

Thus, it will be seen, the theory was propounded, and has been kept alive, by the Ahmadiyya movement throughout the Indian sub-continent. In Kashmir its main votaries are Aziz Kashmiri, his family and their family-run newspaper, *Roshni*. At the academic level Prof Hasnain and, later, Rabbi Dahan Levi have taken it forward.

The West has always abounded in revisionist theories about the Bible. Aziz Kashmiri informs us that one J.M. Robert wrote a book called *Antiquity Unveiled* (Oriental Publishing Co., Philadelphia, USA) in 1912. The book claims that insofar as there is a historical Jesus, it is Appollonius of Tayana.

Kashmiri adds that W. Raymond Drake, who wrote *Spacemen in the Ancient East* in 1970, seemed inclined to accept the 'Jesus was really Appollonius of Tayana' theory. Drake was probably the first western writer to refer to the belief that Jesus had 'survived the cross and lived in Rome, then died in India'.

So, outside obscure manuscripts, the whole controversy is as recent as that.



### Could Christ have come to Kashmîr?

*'And We made the son of Mary and his mother as a Sign: We gave them both shelter of high ground, affording rest and security and furnished with springs.'* The Holy Quran (23: 50)

Aziz Kashmîrî has used a commentary on the Holy Quran in which the words "(and due to greenery)" appear after the word 'ground' in the above verse. For Maulana Muhammad Ali and Aziz Kashmîrî the place referred to in verse 23: 50 is obvious: Kashmîr.

I have used the official translation published by 'The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques' (i.e. the King of Saudi Arabia). This version, in a footnote, discourages any speculation about the place. It says, 'There is no need to look far for the place where the mother and child were given secure shelter. It is described in xix. 22-26... There was a fruitful palm-tree... and she and her child rested there until it was time for her to go to her people with her child.'

Kashmîr has no palm-trees (though I have seen some in neighbouring Jammû, on a high ground, with a spring nearby). Secondly, while Ali and Kashmîrî assume that the mother and child travelled to this place after 'the event of the Cross', the version that I have consulted implies that we are looking at the days immediately after the birth of Christ.

Verse 23: 50 lends itself to either interpretation and does not mention palm trees.

Kashmîrî cites the *Ibn Kathir* (vol.ii, p.246) to the effect that 'according to a saying of the Holy Prophet [peace be upon him], Jesus lived 120 years'. He then cites oral testimony saying that the people of Kashmîr believe that Yuz Aasaf, the prophet buried at Rozabal, had come to Kashmîr from the West 2000 years ago.

Regarding the tomb itself, Kashmîrî quotes from a 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century Arabic book, Shaikh Al-Said-us-Sadiq's *Ikmal-ud-Din*. The book says, 'But before his death [Yuz Aasaf] sent for a disciple of his, Bâbâd by name, who used to serve him and was well versed in all matters.' (Apparently, Bâbâd was St. Thomas.) Yuz Aasaf then 'directed Bâbâd to raise a tomb over him (at the very place he died). He then stretched his legs towards the West and turned his head towards the East and died. May God bless him.'

We learn that Bâbâd erected a tomb 'in the style of Israelites and kept the window in the same manner. [He] inscribed the mark of [Jesus'] feet on [a] stone'. The original walls and roof are gone. What remains, especially the engraved stone, is similar in style to Hindu temples like Martand, Shankaracharya and Awantiporâ.



That St. Thomas had come to India, where Hindu fanatics killed him in Chennai, is history. Was he the same as Bâbâd? And was Yuz Aasaf the same as Lord Jesus?

### What do we know about H. Yuz Aasaf?

Sixteenth and nineteenth century scholars accepted that Yuz Aasaf was from the West and was a 'prophet' and a king. But nowhere did they put a date as old as the beginning of the Christian era. Yuz, of course, is similar to several non-English pronunciations of the name 'Jesus'. It is one of the Persian names of Jesus, seen as 'the collector, the gatherer'. And Aasaf? It means 'a leper who had been cured by Lord Jesus and who had then rejoined the world of the healthy'.

The Muslims do not use the word 'prophet' lightly. Islâm accepts Hazrat Muhammad, peace be on him, as the 'seal of the prophets'. Almost all Muslims interpret this as meaning that while there were several prophets *before* Hazrat Muhammad, there will be none after him. Therefore, Hazrat Yuz Aasaf must obviously have come before.

The oldest extant historical record about Yuz Aasaf are the words of Syed Naseer-ud-din Baihaqi of Khanyar, a 15<sup>th</sup> century saint. He is buried next to Hazrat Yuz Aasaf. A Persian verse written by him indicates that H. Yuz Aasaf had died several centuries before and was a 'prophet' and a 'sultan'. *Vâqeyât-e-Kashmîr*, an early history of Kashmîr, says that God appointed Yuz Aasaf as the 'prophet of Kashmîr'. So Yuz went over to Kashmîr and 'invited the people to [accept] the truth.' However, a contemporâry of 'Budshah' (King Zain-ul-Abedin) says in '*Vaqâye-e-Kashmîr*' that 'Yuz Asaf,' a descendant of Prophet Moses, was the Egyptian envoy at Budshah's court. Since no details have been given about 'Yuz Asaf,' he needn't be the same as H. Yuz Aasaf.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century historian Hassan believes that the two are the same. He says that there used to be a slab on the wall of the temple on Solomon/Shankaracharya hill. Its inscription talked of an Egyptian youth who came to Kashmîr and claimed to be a prophet. Hassan says that when the Sikhs ruled over Kashmîr, one of them got the writing on that slab erased.

Aziz Kashmîrî quotes Mulla Nadiri (15<sup>th</sup> century), the first historian of Kashmîr who happened to be Muslim, as saying about the same wall, 'During [Raja Gopadatta's] reign... the dome of the temple on top of the mound of Sulaiman cracked. [The Raja] deputed one of his ministers named Sulaiman, who had come from Persia, to repair it. The Hindus objected that he was... of another religion. During this time Hazrat Yuz Asaf from Baitul Muqaddas [Jerusalem] [came] to the holy Valley, proclaimed his prophethood... it was because of this prophet's instructions that Sulaiman,



whom the Hindus call Sandeman, completed the repairs of the dome in the year fifty and four. [Regardless of which of the two main Hindu calendars was followed, this would be in the first century of the Christian era. Raja Gopaditya's era has been variously estimated at the 6<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries A.D. Gopananda's reign was almost certainly between A.D. 79 and 109.] Further, on one of the stones of the flank walls encasing the stairs he inscribed, "In these times Yuz Asaf proclaimed his prophethood" and inscribed on the other stone of the stairs that he was Yusu, Prophet of Children of Israel.'

What is eerie about this text, if authentic, is that it takes us back to Sandhimati [Sandeman]. The difference is that now it is Yuz Asaf, a contemporâry of Sandhimati, who has the attributes of Christ. Personally, I am intrigued by the fact that Sandhimati-Arya Raj had a Guru called Isan (ee-sân) who had saved him from crucifixion. 'When he came to see his disciple Sandiman, the whole city marched to welcome him and no one remained in his house.' (See also the chapter on 'Srinagar City'.) The name Isan resembles 'Isa,' the Indo-Islâmic variant of Jesus' name. Isan is also the name of the Hindu God Shiv(a), whose wife is called, among other things, by the very Biblical name Sarah (pron. sâ-râ).

Kashmirî, however, delivers another clincher. He quotes Nadiri as saying, 'I have seen in a book of Hindus that this prophet [Yuz Aasaf] was really Hazrat Isa [Jesus] *Ruh Allah*...'

At least this explains why the hillock known today as the Shankaracharya hill, and in older days as the Gopadri hill or Jest (Jyesth) Laddar, is called the Throne of Solomon by Muslims. The Solomon of the hill is obviously not the Solomon of the Bible.

Some of the teachings attributed to Yuz Aasaf are identical to those of Lord Jesus. Aziz Kashmirî says that Yuz Aasaf called his gospel the *Bushra*, which is the Arabic word for a Christian 'gospel'. Kashmirî adds that even Yuz Aasaf would relate the parable of the seed-sower.

Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has been made out that the Kashmirîs had always believed that Jesus (and Moses) were buried in Kashmîr, that the Kashmirîs had always thought that they had descended from the Jews, and so on. However, the encyclopædic Hassan does not mention any of this. He merely says that the Shias believed that H. Yuz Aasaf was a descendant of Imam Jâfar Sadiq. We are now told that ancient and mediaeval Kashmirî manuscripts had specifically mentioned *Isha Maseeh* [Jesus, the Messiah]. This was never known at the popular, mass level though.

However, Hassan hastens to add that enlightened persons say that 'the light of prophethood' radiates from the grave of H. Yuz Aasaf.



I agree. Jesus or not, all evidence indicates that a prophet lies buried at Rozabal. And 'prophet' is a word that no Muslim would use loosely.

### In Ladâkh, Nepal and China

I remember reading about a village in Japan, the inhabitants of which are Caucasoid, tall and, often, brown-haired. They claim to be the descendants of Lord Jesus. Their story could be totally untrue. But legends about Jesus' visits pop up in Murree and Lahore (both in Pakistan), then Kashmir, Ladâkh, Benares, Nepal and China. Add these dots together and you get a clearly defined and credible 'Jesus-route' from Palestine to China and Japan. No one in regions that are either north or south of that route claims that Jesus passed through or settled in their country.

Around 1887, a Russian traveller called Nicholas Notovitch created a stir by claiming that 'In his fourteenth year, young Issa [Jesus], the Blessed One, came to [the Ladâkh] side of the Sindh [River Indus] and settled among Aryans, in the country beloved of God.' Apparently, Jesus had 'discourses with the Sudras' which infuriated 'the white priests' who decided to kill Issa. Jesus got to know of this and fled to Nepal. (Aziz Kashmirî, quoting from Notovitch's *Life of Saint Issa* and from *Nineteenth Century*.)

Notovitch claims to have found this information in the library of the Hemis monastery in Ladâkh. One keeps hearing about this manuscript, which is said to have disappeared from public view since 1922. According to Notovitch's *Mother of All Conspiracy Theories*, the Vatican got the manuscript whisked away. Hassnain and Levi write, 'In 1894, the Church [apparently the Church of England, this time] deputed a neo-convert, Ahmad Shah to Ladâkh in the disguise of a *hakim*... to refute the findings of Nicolas Notovitch... It is probable that out of the [sic] great fear of the then British Government in India, the Buddhist Lama [of Hemis] concealed the scrolls or handed over some fragments to Ahmad Shah.'

Apparently, Lord Jesus spent the 'missing years,' from age thirteen to twenty-nine in the East, mainly India. The Brâhmins of Benares knew him as '*Saint Issa*' and accepted him as their '*Buddha*'.

Fida M. Hassnain and Dahan Levi have quoted at length from Notovitch. They show how Lord Jesus studied Buddhism, Jainism and other eastern religions during his six years in Sind, Benares, Kapilavastu, Rajagiri, the Punjab, Rajputana, Orissa and other parts of India. They go on to assert that 'the holy book of [R]evelation was the Tibetan Gospel.'

Aziz Kashmirî says that he saw at Hemis a sketch 'of a Lama who, quite unlike other Lamas, [had] a beard... [One of the Lamas at Hemis said that this was a portrait of] Yashosh, the Lama who was raised two thousand years ago... Yashosh corresponds with Ashosh [see '*Aish Muqâm*' in the



chapter on 'Ânañtnâg'). Yashosh is also similar to Yashoo, one of the Indian names of Jesus.

Hassnain and Levi have photographed what they claim is an ancient Ladâkhi mural which has crucifixes drawn on it.

Kashmîrî says that Nelson Bruknaer has written in *The Second Life of Jesus Christ* that he found Buddhist manuscripts at Hemis and Samvas (near Lhasa, Tibet). These indicated that the coming of the Bagwa Bodhisattva Avalokitesvar (the white, enlightened great merciful [being] who sees everything) had been prophesied 500 years before the birth of Jesus. Apparently these manuscripts talk of this incarnation as one who 'came from a foreign land,' as one who 'was born of a Virgin,' who 'spoke in parables,' who spoke of 'Amit Abha, God the Father' and who had 'wheel-like marks on his hand and feet'.

Bruknaer is further quoted as saying that 'In Japan, [the] teachings [of this prophet regarding] the Father God (Amit Abha) [are] now called "Namu Amida Butsu".'

Kashmîrî says that, in 1922, Swami Abehananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, translated 124 verses from the Hemis manuscript into Bengali. So, though the original Hemis manuscript has not been seen since, the Bengali translation of a portion of the manuscript might still be available.

This author has little time for conspiracy theories, especially those that portray the Vatican as a sinister-and omnipresent-body determined to snuff out all dissent. However, Kashmîr had at least heard of the Christ through Islâm. Hemis is incredibly isolated from the rest of the world. So if there's even a mention of 'Issa' in an ancient, or even mediæval, manuscript found at Hemis or Samvas, it would indicate that the Lord had visited Ladâkh or at least Tibet.

## Conclusion

If the manuscripts of the *Bhavishya Maha Puran* and Mullah Nadiri's *Târeekh-e-Kashmîr* have not been tampered with and if the Hemis manuscript exists, then there can be no doubt but that Lord Jesus had lived for at least a while in Kashmîr and Ladâkh.

Too many copies of the *Rājātaraṅginī* exist in several languages for any interpolations to have been made in recent centuries. The *Rājātaraṅginī* refers unambiguously to a Christ-like seer who was crucified by a Herod-like king, and who lived in and ruled over Kashmîr, possibly in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.

In any case, there's an enormous amount of circumstantial evidence, which indicates that Jesus might have come to Kashmîr.



I believe that Lord Jesus ascended bodily to heaven. Therefore, I find it difficult to accept that his tomb could exist anywhere in the world. However, scholars like Aziz Kashmiri have made out a fairly plausible case that Hazrat Yuz Aasaf, who lies buried in Rozabal, might have been Lord Jesus Christ himself.

### Moses in Kashmir

When they die, all good Americans go to Paris. The rest of us have to settle for heaven. Many, notably the Mughals, thought that Kashmir was heaven on earth. The Kashmiris themselves think of their land as being 'a replica of heaven on earth'. Moses, the Prophet, was not just good, he was one of the best. So, it stands to reason that he, too, would be buried in Kashmir.

The precise location is near the tomb of Sank Bibi on the Booth Mountain in Bandipura. According to Aziz Kashmiri, Bandipura, which is 34 miles from Srinagar, was called Bethpura in the past. I have not been able to confirm this, or any of the other details given in this section, from 19<sup>th</sup> century records. So, I mainly have Aziz Kashmiri's word for all this.

Francois Bernier (1620-1688) was perhaps the first to record the existence of a belief that 'Moses died in the city of Kashmir and that this took place within a league of it'. (Srinagar was known as Shehr-e-Kashmir or the city of Kashmir during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It would seem that some people still used the name when M. Bernier came visiting.)

Actually, it was the handy *Bhavishya Maha Puran* that is said to have first alluded to Moses. Must get the original manuscript checked. If it has not been tampered with then its contents revolutionise what the world knows about Moses and—as we have seen Jesus. Apparently it says, 'The entire land is full of the followers of the [sic] Moses with the exception of sacred land of river Sarasouti,' (P.I.A. 5, shlok 30, quoted in *Christ in Kashmir*, p.21.)

Judaism was not unknown in this part of Asia. One Jewish family continued to live in Kabul (Afghanistan) till 1998. There were eminent Jews in Srinagar till the 1960s. Kashmiri quotes the November 23, 1898, issue of the British *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, as saying, 'One of [the manuscripts found in South India] is an old copy of the *Book of Moses*, written on a roll of leather... It was brought from Cashmere.'

What the Old Testament itself records about the death of Moses is as follows:

'1 And Moses went up from the plains of *Moab* unto the mountain of *Nebo*, to the top of *Pis'gah*, that is over and against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan. 2 And all Naph'ta-li, and the land of E'phra-im, and Ma-nas'seh, and all the land of Judah, unto the



utmost sea... 5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab... 6 And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-pe'or; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.' (*Deuteronomy*, 34: 1, 2, 5, 6; The Holy Bible, King James Version, published by The Gideons International, 1978. The italics are all mine.)

Elsewhere, *Deuteronomy* (4: 46) talks again of 'the valley over against Beth-pe'or' and of *Heshbon*. Numbers (27: 12) mentions 'mount *Ab'a-rim*'.

Aziz Kashmiri claims that Bethpura is the old name of Bandipura. This seems plausible because Beth is the local name of River Jehlum. 'Pura' means 'town' in all north Indian languages. Kashmiri cites authority that Booth, the mountain where the said tomb is located, is really called Nebu Ball. He adds that *Pisgah*, aka *Chasmagah*, is a mile away from the tomb. Moab, he says, is a pasture north-east of the tomb believed to be Moses'. As for Heshbon, it's a little village now called Hasbal. Mount Abarim is a hillock 4 miles from Moab, called *Abul* or *Ablu* by the local people.

Kashmiri goes on to cite Nazim Sewharwi's *Nigaristan-e-Kashmir* to the effect that the 'brothers Moses and Haroon [rested] at Haroon... The locality is famous as "Haroon" only because the prophet Haroon is [buried] there.' Srinagar has a suburb called Harwan. In Urdu '*Harwan*' is spelt exactly the same as '*Haroon*', the Muslim name for Aaron.

Far fetched? Perhaps. For this author it would be sufficient if it could be proved that Bandipura was indeed called Bethpura in the past.

*My findings:* I decided to cross-check the facts. Several elders of Bandipura said that their town was called Bethpura 'during the era of the Jews.' But the elders were merely going by what they had heard: more likely from the media than from their ancestors. Therefore, the evidence given by them is weak.

Revenue records have a section that mentions the *wajâh tasmiyâ* [the 'reason for naming' any person or place in a particular manner]. However, we could not find a single revenue record that confirmed this belief.

The oldest extant revenue record (which dates to AD 1890) says that the town took its name after its first inhabitants, the Bāndey community [which is of a Turkish origin]. The name of the town's mediæval founder is Hasu (Hasan?) Mir [again a Turkish name], who came here from Srinagar. No mention of Jews or Bethpeor.

Bandipura can *not* be a corruption of 'Bethpura' because both are full-fledged words, with distinct meanings. Bethpura (or Vethpura) means 'the town [near] River Jehlum.'

However, regarding the other italicised words, Mr. Aziz Kashmiri does have a point. Almost all the places mentioned in the Bible and italicised by me above seem to be there. *Nebu Baal* (also called Ibâl and Mâwâ) is a



hillock near Irun [pron. ee-run, rhymes with 'pun']. The tomb of Shank (or Sank, both rhyme with 'sunk') Bibi (also known as Dod Mouj or 'the milk mother') is in Bonthoo on a hillock called Booth. The so-called tomb of Moses, too, is in Bonthoo.

What Aziz Kashmîrî identifies with the biblical 'Moab' is a meadow called 'Mâhâb', which is close to 'Athwatoo' (and beyond the Mântrey meadow).

And the mystery does not end there. A Vethpura (the name of which is often pronounced much like the Biblical Bethpeor) does exist in Kashmîr. It is a pretty village in the Lasjan area, right next to Srinagar City, on the banks of the Jehlum.

**Note of caution:** The quotes from Nâdiri's book are absolute clinchers about the 'Jesus in Kashmîr' theory: if they are authentic. But no one has seen a copy of this book in the last four hundred years. The only remnants that we have of Nâdiri's work are excerpts and quotations from it in Syed Ali's history, which was written in A.D. 1579.



## Hazratbal

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Hazratbal is one of the most venerable shrines for the Muslims of Kashmir because in it is preserved a hair from the beard of Muhammad, the Holy Prophet, often lovingly called Hazrat Muhammad, peace be on him. The Kashmiri "bal" is pronounced to rhyme with the English words "hull" and "gull" and probably means "the banks of a lake". A similarly spelt Hindi/Urdu word (but pronounced "baal") means hair. This has led to many non-Kashmiri writers (Indian as well as foreign) to assume that Hazratbal means "the prophet's hair". A better translation of the name of this famous shrine would be "the prophet's lake".

That 'bal' does not refer to hair is certain. Equally definitely it means 'place'. However, beyond that 'bal' could mean one of many kinds of places, such as 'banks of river or lake', 'a place where there is a natural spring' or even 'rendezvous; a meeting place'. Hazrat is an Arabic word meaning "sir" or "signor". The word 'bal' is of Dravidian or Shina origin.

The Moo-e-Muqaddas (Holy Hair) was brought from Lahore to Kashmir by Khwaja Noor-ud-Din of Ishber (or Ishāwar), in 1700, during the reign of Aurangzeb (some writers mistakenly say Shah Jehan). In those days the place where the Dargah (shrine) is presently located is said to have been a garden, the Sher Khān Bagh. (from *Tazkara-e-Auliya* by Hassan Khuyami, the 19<sup>th</sup> century historian.)

### Festive Occasions/Display of the Relic

The Moo-e-Muqaddas is exhibited (in the casket in which it has been preserved) on several important occasions every year. *The Gazetteer* notes, "Numerous boats of various sizes are (on such occasions) ranged along the stone quay on the border of the open space intervening between the lake and the sacred edifice in which the relic is preserved. Sikhs, Hindus, and Kashmiris (sic) of both sexes, and of all ranks and ages, are there for the purposes of seeing and being seen; the Muhammadans crowd around the door from which the sacred relic is exhibited, and breathe forth their aspirations, whilst



they touch the glass and press their lips and forehead against it with looks of the most extreme awe and veneration.

"There is also a tree near the Hazratbal, which is said to have been brought as a cutting from Mecca.

"Five or six fairs are held at the Hazratbal in the course of the year; the principal one is on the Mairaj [better known as the Shab-e-Meraj-PD], or the day on which Muhammad rode to heaven upon the mule [horse-PD] Al Borak (the Thunderer). Another great fair, held about the 1st of August, is called the Watul Myla, or fair of the Watuls [char-people; "sweepers"-PD], because that tribe intermarry on that day. Every-one that has time comes to the lake, the poorer classes on foot, and a succession of feasting, singing, and naaching [dancing?-PD] is kept up for forty-eight hours, and the entertainments are enlivened by the performances of itinerant bards."

The Watul Mélé is a tradition that started disappearing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Holy Relic is mainly displayed on the Jummat-ul-vidâ, the Eid-e-Milâd-un-Nabî (peace be on him) and the Shab-e-Meraj. The two main Eids are great festivals for the shrine but not ones on which the Relic is displayed.

Other shrines in Kashmîr that possess relics of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), too, display relics only on these days. These shrines are Kaabamarg, Khirram Sirhama and seer (all Ânañtnâg), Pinjoora Sahib (Pulwâmâ) and Jenab sahib, Soura (Srinagar)

If you are unable to go to Hazratbal on a festive occasion, going there on a Friday noon (around 1 pm.) will be a fair substitute. Devotees come in very large numbers on Fridays. Exotic foodstuffs-especially gigantic local 'bread' eaten with a paste of sweetened grain-are sold in the nearby market.

Women are not allowed inside the sanctum. As at other Muslim shrines in Kashmîr they look into the shrine and offer prayers at various viewpoints along the walls of the shrine. All Muslim shrines in Kashmîr (and elsewhere) are called *dargâhs* or *ziyârats*. However, if a Kashmîri mentions *dargâh* without specifying which one, he means Hazratbal. Do keep that in mind when asking for directions and when you hear bus conductors calling out destinations.

### A Brief History of the Holy Relic and the Shrine<sup>i</sup>

Imam Hussain, one of the most venerable figures of Islâm, was the son of Hazrat Fatima, who in turn was the daughter of Hazrat Muhammad, peace be on him, the prophet of Islâm. Hussain was bequeathed some relics of the Holy Prophet, mostly hair from the beard.

One of these relics, the one now in Hazratbal, was passed down the generations to his descendant, Syed Abdullah of Mecca. (All descendants of the Holy Prophet are known as Syeds.) On account of some litigation that



Abdullah was involved in, he was stripped of his citizenship by his government.

So in 1634, the Syed left Mecca and emigrated to Bijapur, where he was given a largeish estate by the Indian rulers, perhaps on account of his exalted ancestry. However, shortly thereafter Aurangzeb became the Mughal emperor and forfeited this estate, evicting Abdullah's son Syed Hamid from it.

Hamid went to Delhi to get the estate restored. There he met Khwaja Noor-ud-Din, a wealthy philanthropist from Srinagar. (The Khwaja is also known as Kh. Noor-ud-Din Aishawari, the last word often being mispronounced 'Ashbarry' or 'Ishberi'. His ancestors had probably migrated from Aishâwar in Central Asia. It is incorrectly believed that he was from Ishber, a village near the Nishât Gardens.) According to one version it was the Khwaja who had travelled to the Deccan from whence he obtained the Holy Relic from the younger Syed.

The precise details of the transaction between the Syed and the Khwaja are not known. Some say that the relic was gifted to the Khwaja. Others have it that the Khwaja purchased it from the Syed. In any case it does seem certain that the Khwaja had helped Hamid in some way and had thus put him under his obligation.

One source claims that the Khwaja had paid one lakh rupees to the Syed for the Holy Relic. (According to Sir Walter Lawrence, a 19th century British historian, who was obviously going by secondary sources, it was Syed Abdullah who gave the relic to the Khwaja. This can not be correct because Abdullah had died before Aurangzeb ascended to the throne.)

The Khwaja thus became the first resident of Kashmîr to receive a relic of the Prophet of Islâm, peace be on him. In his excitement he set out for Kashmîr, via Lahore. The Syed sent his attendant Kh. Maidanish, who had been the guardian of the Holy Relic, along with Kh. Noor-ud-Din.

It was when Noor-ud-Din reached Lahore that Aurangzeb got to know that the Khwaja had obtained the Holy Relic. He sent soldiers to force Kh. Noor-ud-Din to give up the Holy Relic. The emperor then sent the relic to Ajmer to be kept in the shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. The loss was too much for Kh. Noor-ud-Din to bear. He died of the shock.

Meanwhile, it is said, Aurangzeb had a visitation in a dream in which he was reprimanded for having obtained the Holy Relic by force. So on the ninth day of confiscating it, Aurangzeb sent for Kh. Maidanish and returned the Holy Relic. On learning of Kh. Noor-ud-Din's death, Aurangzeb arranged to get Kh. Noor-ud-Din's coffin sent to Srinagar. This was on the 10th March, 1700.



The Holy Relic and the coffin travelled to Srinagar via Shopian and reached the city's Haft Chinâr area on the 5th April, 1700.

At the time Fâzil Khân was the Mughal governor of Kashmir. On his orders the Holy Relic was kept in the Naqshband Sahib shrine of downtown Srinagar. But the crowds that came to see the Holy Relic were so large that a more commodious home had to be found. The choice fell on the lakeside orchards (bâgh) of the Mughal noble Sher Khân. (Sadiq Khân, according to another account.)

Out of deference for the public sentiment, Sher/ Sadiq Khân donated his huge mansion, located amidst the orchard, to house the Holy Relic. And out of respect for Kh. Noor-ud-Din, the good Khwaja was buried in the compound of the Holy Relic's new shrine, which was now given the name Hazratbal.

Kh. Noor-ud-Din had no son, so his daughter Anâyat Begum, and her husband Khwaja Bullaqee Banday, became the keepers of the Holy Relic. Since the relic had to be displayed to the public on important religious occasions, Banday was given the task of doing so. However, the responsibility obviously overwhelmed Banday, who could not handle large crowds, which included religious elders and the power elite. So he asked a kindly person, Shaikh Radhoo Mohhamed Chishti to take over instead.

Radhoo was thus the first keeper of the relic. On his death it passed back to Banday, who proved equal to the task this time around.

A contemporary, Mirza Qalandar Beg, was at hand to record all these events in his book "*Hujajiti Qasirah*".

Almost a hundred years later, when Kashmir was under the Pathans, it is said that Âzâd Khân, the governor of Kashmir, had doubts about the genuineness of the Holy Relic, as do some Muslims outside Kashmir. (Pristine Islâm frowns at such 'idolatry'.)

In a fit of malice, Khân broke the glass tube that contained the Holy Relic. He used a (hair) tweezer to pull the Holy Relic out. Legend has it that then a miracle took place. Not only did the holy hair not come out, its tip, which was caught in the tweezer, started getting sucked inwards into what remained of the tube.

Âzâd Khân later died a painful, miserable death.

Every mosque in cold climes has a hammâm which consists of a heated room (in Kashmir this is done by heating stones below the floor) and warm water for the wuzoo (ablutions performed before each prayer). The original Hammâm Masjid (mosque) at Hazratbal was constructed in 1798 by Nawab Ahsanullah Khân of Dhaka (formerly Dacca), a noble of Kashmiri origin.



### The 1940s: The MAT takes charge

In the 1940s, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, who went on to become the first Prime Minister (and later Chief Minister) of independent Jammû and Kashmîr, and his colleagues, took over the management of the shrine, through the MAT (Muslim Auqâf Trust). Since then a nominee of the MAT has normally read the Friday sermon. He happens to be a member of the Bandy clan. The Sheikh was the Chief Trustee of the MAT. Dr. Farooq Abdullah, later the Chief Minister of J&K, inherited his father's position in the MAT.

The Sheikh was enormously popular. His followers came from all over rural Kashmîr (and Jammû and Ladâkh), and are generally known as the shér (lion) people, after his title "the lion of Kashmîr".

Those of his politico-religious rival, on the other hand, were concentrated in the "inner city" of Srînagar, and their leader manages the Jâmâ Masjid. This group was known as the bakra (buckraa; goat) "party" because of the goatee beards of some of their leaders. Relations between the two groups used to be extremely tense and if a wife's parents belonged to the other group, she would have to put up with considerable coldness from her husband and in-laws if there had been a sher-bakra clash recently. However, since the mid-1980s, relations have improved considerably, after the younger leaders of the two groups initiated an *entente*.

### The Winter of 1963/ 1964: The Relic Disappears

On the 27th December, 1963, all of India was rocked when the Moo-e-Muqaddas suddenly disappeared.

A committee of the leading religious figures of Kashmîr was formed. It was called the Majlis-e-Amal-e-Husooli-e-Moo-e-Muqaddas (lit.: the action committee for the restoration of the holy hair). The then Mîrwaiz, Maulvi Muhammad Farooq, was its Chairman and Maulana Masoodi its Secretary General.

To the Kashmîri Muslim this is the most revered symbol of Islâm outside Mecca and Madina. A hundred thousand people, distraught at the loss, gathered at the Lal Chowk to seek solace in the words of Maulana Masoodi, who was to address them.

Just then it started to snow. Those who had brought umbrellas along reached for them. But one of the speakers forbade the crowd from seeking the protection of umbrellas. So the crowd listened to the Maulana for an hour and a half, unmindful of the two inches of snow that gathered on their heads and shoulders.

While the Kashmîris claim that this is one of the many miracles associated with the Holy Relic, this certainly shows the discomfort they are prepared to endure for it.



Things quietened after the Holy Relic was recovered, equally mysteriously, on the 4th January, 1964. A committee of experts vouched for the genuineness of the relic that was recovered.

The then Deputy Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, and the Prime Minister of Jammû and Kashmir, Shamsuddin, were present at the identification, along with the members of the Majlis (committee), leading saints, and the keeper of the shrine, Ghulam Muhammad Farooqui.

When the Holy Relic was brought out for identification, Shamsuddin "fainted and fell on the ground" (-Hagroo).

Syed Mirak Shah Kâhshâni was easily the most respected saint in all of Kashmir at the time. There are several legends associated with this modern day saint and it was said that Allah would never deny him a wish. He was also said to be clairvoyant.

Syed Mirak's testimony was an important factor in accepting the relic that had been recovered as the genuine object. Farooqui's was the other critical vote in its favour. In the event there was unanimity that the relic was the original one. Among other things, there can be no doubt that the glass casket containing the Holy Relic was the same.

### **1967: A new building**

Because of its massive following and political stature Hazratbal needed bigger premises. The J&K Muslim Auqaf Trust built the present mosque and ziyârat, as well as the Hamam Masjid, in 1967. Hazratbal has since been housed in one of the most impressive post-war mosques anywhere in the world—a modern, Indo-Islâmic (rather than Indo-Saracenic) building. It was the first shrine of importance in all of Kashmir built in this modern, pan-Indian style. (The example has been infectious. Hardly any shrine or mosque built in Kashmir after that has been in the traditional Iranian-Kashmîrî style.)

On the 21st February, 1992, the Madinatul Aloom, a religious school in the premises, its irreplaceable library and its mosque were set on fire. This fire also caused some damage to the Hamam Mosque.

### **Events of the 1990s Occupation and Siege of 1993**

The fire was only one of the many traumas that Hazratbal had to go through during the 1990s. Indeed, the fortunes of Kashmir's beloved shrine during that turbulent decade mirrored the ups and downs of Kashmir itself. Various militant groups took control of the shrine in 1990. An inter-group scuffle took place on a stage in the shrine's premises later that year.

On Friday, the 15th October, 1993, the Holy Relic was once again the centre of a major crisis. A local policeman reported that an attempt had been made to tamper with one of the locks that secured the Holy Relic.



Government forces surrounded the shrine and laid siege in an attempt to get the armed militants inside the shrine to surrender. Some devotees also got trapped inside.

After a 32-day siege, during which life in the urban areas of Kashmîr came to a standstill as never before, on the 16th November, 1993, the militants (and the devotees) came out of the shrine and were taken into custody by the police. They left their assault rifles and explosives behind in the shrine, from where the army recovered them. The whole episode, fortunately, was bloodless.

In 1994, control of the shrine lapsed back into the militants' hands; and remained with them till the end of March 1996. Then the state police flushed the militants out after a prolonged encounter. Thirty-two people died in that incident.

However, after that the militants could not regain control of the shrine. The MAT moved back. It stayed there for the next seven years.

### **September 2003: The government takes over from the MAT**

In September 2003 the state government assumed direct charge of Hazratbal and several other Muslim shrines thitherto controlled by the MAT.

### **References**

- i. Many parts of this section are based on Ghulam Nabi Hagroo's *History of the Holy Relic-Hazrat Bal*. The 20th century parts are based on the author's own notes and conversations with Ahmed Ali Fayyaz of the *Daily Excelsior*. G.R. Bhat has written a book on the subject in Urdu. The reference to Aishâwar are based on conversations with him.



## Islâm in Kashmîr

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### The first Muslims in Kashmîr

According to a weak tradition<sup>1</sup> the first Muslims to come to Kashmîr were two companions (suhâbîs) of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). This was during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (c. A.D. 570-632), when 'Dâna Datt' (or Dâna Ditta) was said to have been the king of Kashmîr. The tradition goes on to add that the king was so impressed by the visitors that he began to lead a very austere life. He also took to donating a tenth of his income from agriculture to the poor and needy. (This is an Islâmic charitable practice called *ushr*.) However, the names of the companions are not known. Nor are there any historical records of their visit. Besides, none of Kashmîr's numerous traditional histories-written by Syed Ali, Hassan or Malik Haidar-mentions this tradition.

More important, no authentic history of Kashmîr refers to a king of this name during the period in question. The names of the kings of Kashmîr from roughly A.D. 560 to 634 are: Pravarasén II, Bâlâditya, Durlabh-varan and Durlabhak. The kings from A.D. 634 to 733 were Chandr-pîr Vajrâditya, Tarapîr, Lalitâditya I and Kuvalya-pîr. None of them was called Dâna Datt, Dâna Ditta or anything similar. The king with the nearest sounding name was Rânâditya. Kings of this name ruled Kashmîr from A.D. 219 to 519. But that was almost a century before the companions of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) started taking the mission to distant lands.

About Hameem, on the other hand, there is evidence. He was a Syrian, and the first Muslim known to have entered Kashmîr. He migrated to Kashmîr around A.D. 712, in the entourage of Jaisiya, the defeated (Hindu) prince of neighbouring Sindh. That's right: 'neighbouring.' The kingdom of Sindh, at that stage, 'extended on the east to Kashmîr'. The then Rai of Kashmîr granted the fugitive Prince Jaisiya an estate called Shakalha. It is not certain that Shakalha was within Kashmîr Valley, though it was certainly a part of the kingdom of Kashmîr. (It was also in the eighth century-around A.D. 733—that Kashmîr first faced the possibility of an Arab invasion.)



Jaisiya was the son of Dâhir. Today, Dâhir is regarded, by Hindu and Muslim historians alike, as 'the last Hindu ruler of Sindh'. He was defeated and killed by Muhammad-bin-Qasim, 'the first Muslim conqueror of India'. However, neither Jaisiya nor Hameem saw the conflict as one between Hindus and Muslims. Nor did they see themselves as belonging to two hostile religions. We know that five hundred Arab Muslims had joined Dahir's army. Hameem was probably the son of one of those Arab soldiers.

Hameem was extremely close to Jaisiya. When Jaisiya fled from Sindh to Kashmîr, he accompanied his prince. And when Jaisiya died it was Hameem, son of Sâma, who inherited the estate of Shakalha. Hameem constructed the first mosques in Kashmîr, on land gifted by the (Hindu) Rai, who 'much respected' Hameem and bestowed 'great honour and regard' on him.

Nothing is known about where Hameem's mosques might have been. The oldest known, surviving Islâmic monument in Kashmîr is Bulbul Lankar. It was built almost six hundred years later (around 1320) on the right bank of the Jehlum, just after the present Ali Kadal. It was at Bulbul Lankar that the first known Kashmîri converts to Islâm would gather. Sultan Rinchen, his brother-in-law (his Queen Kota Rani's brother) Râvan Chandr and his commander-in-chief set the trend by accepting Islâm. Ten thousand others followed, impressed by Syed Bilal @ Bulbul Shah's teachings. Historian G.M.D. Sufi writes, 'The newly converted people, of their own accord, converted temples into mosques in consequence of their change of faith.'

What happened in the almost six centuries between Hameem and Bulbul Shah?

In A.D. 751 the Arabs conquered Gilgit from the Chinese. A few years later (between 754 and 761) we hear of contacts between the king of Kashmîr, Vajraditya-Bappiyaka, and Muslim slave traders, as well as of the introduction of Islâmic practices in Kashmîr.

King Harsh (1089-1101) certainly employed 'Turushka' (Turkish?) Muslim officers in senior positions in his army. By the twelfth century, many Dard tribes had converted from Buddhism to Islâm. (Dardistân and Gilgit are both in Pâkistân-occupied Kashmîr.) Around 1277, Marco Polo mentioned that there were Muslims in Kashmîr.

There is some debate on who the ancestors of Shâh Mîr were and where they came from. (See 'A History of Kashmîr'.) Ikrâm<sup>ii</sup> says that his real name was Shâh Mirzâ, that he was a saint from Swat (now in Pâkistân) and that he came over to Kashmîr in 1315 during the reign of King Singh Dev or Sambha Dev<sup>i</sup>. The generous king employed Shâh Mirzâ in his court. He

<sup>i</sup> This seems plausible. A king called Simhadev ruled Kashmîr from 1286 to 1300. His brother Sahadev (1301-1320) succeeded him. The name mentioned by Ikram combines the two.



was so impressed by Shâh Mirzâ's saintliness and talents that he soon promoted him to a very high rank.

The king then appointed Shâh Mirzâ's sons to senior positions in his government. One of the king's successors (presumably the other brother) made Shâh Mirzâ's sons his ambassadors plenipotentiary.

### **The first recorded conversions**

Thus, Islâm had come to Kashmîr much before 1320, around which year Rinchen and ten thousand others converted, and Islâm was adopted as the state religion.

Syed Bilal Shah @ Syed Abdur Rahim Turkestâni, also known as Bulbul Shah and Syed Sharaf-ud-dîn, was a disciple of Shah Nematullah Wali Farsi. (Some believe that it was Shah Nematullah, and not his disciple, who converted Rinchen to Islâm.) Both belonged to the Suharwardy order of Sufism. (The Muslims of almost all of India, and Pâkistân, as well parts of Bânglâ Dêsh belong to the Chishti order. In Kashmîr, however, the Qâdiri, Naqshbandi and Suharwardy orders are followed.)

Bulbul Shah was the first of a long line of Syeds who came to Kashmîr to proselytise. He came from Turkestân, via Baghdad.

### **The migration of the Syeds**

Mîr Syed Ali Hamadâni, the apostle of Kashmîr, better known as the "Shah of Hamadân" and 'Ameer-e-Kabeer' (1314-1384) is arguably the most celebrated of these Syeds. The Shah was born in Hamadân, Iran. He travelled across the continents for twenty-one years, in the pursuit of knowledge. He met 1400 saints in the process before he returned to Hamadân. That was when Timur had unleashed a reign of terror, forcing seven hundred Syeds, led by the Shah of Hamadân, to flee to Kashmîr in 1372.

(The Syeds are descendants of Hazrat Muhammad, peace be upon him, the prophet of Islâm, through his daughter, Hazrat Fatima and son-in-law Hazrat Ali. The Kashmîri word for 'Syed' is 'Mal'. The neighbourhood in Srinagar where the Syeds settled is still known as Malaratta.)

The Shah went to Ladâkh around 1381 and was the first to establish a mosque there. He belonged to the Kubrawi branch of the Suharwardy order of Sufis. It was the Shah who brought this sect to Kashmîr. The Kubrawis dominate the religious establishment of Srinagar, indeed Kashmîr, to this day. The Shah is said to have induced thirty-seven thousand Kashmiris to convert to Islâm.

In the state there are four major shrines dedicated to the Shah: in the Khânqâh-e-Mu'alla (Srinagar), Trâl, Doru and Shey (Ladâkh). (There also are several lesser-known shrines of the Shah.) The Shah died either at Hazara (Pâkistân) or in Kafiristan. However, he was buried in Khatlan (Turkestân).



The Shah's son, Mîr Muhammad Hamadâni (1372-1450), returned to Kashmîr in 1393, accompanied by three hundred more Syeds. At the time Sinhabhatt/ Suhabhadd was the commander-in-chief of King Sikander's army, and later the prime minister.

Suhabhadd was extremely impressed by the Mîr. He converted to Islām, taking the name Malik Saif-ud-dîn. He also gave the Mîr his daughter, later named Bibi Baria, in marriage. The Mîr, too, is buried in Khatlan.

### **The Syeds exchange ideas with the rishîs**

By now there were more than a thousand Syeds, plus their descendants, in Kashmîr. They exchanged ideas with Kashmîr's own Muslim mystics, who were known as rishîs/ reshîs and bâbâs.

One of the greatest of these rishîs and saints was Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn (1377-1438; see 'Budgâm'). He is regarded by almost all Kashmîris, urban and rural, Hindu and Muslim, as the patron saint of Kashmîr. (The Kashmîrî Pandits call him Nund Rishi and Sahajananda and accept him as one of their saints.)

The Sheikh's spiritual guide (and, some say, wet-nurse) is known to the Muslims as Lalla Arifa, to the Hindus as Lalleshwari, and accepted by both as the religious leader and guide, Lal Ded. Such was (and, to some extent, still is) the composite-culture of Kashmîr. (The chapter on 'Budgâm', in particular the section on the Sheikh, mentions the progress of the Rishi order, especially the Sheikh's disciples.)

### **The Suhabhadd Episode**

Did coercion and violence play any role at all in the conversion of the Kashmîris to Islām? There is unanimity among historians, Hindu, Muslim and British, that conversions were entirely voluntary. They were the result of the example of and preaching by the sufis and rishîs.

However, when it comes to the reign, and role, of King Sikander, the so-called 'But Shikan' (idol breaker), this agreement suddenly breaks down. Almost all Muslim historians agree with G.M.D. Sufi that 'the propagation of Islām in Kashmîr received a strong impetus in the time of Sultan Sikandar' (1389-1413). Where they differ is about whether force was used.

*The migration of Kashmîrî Pandits:* Many Hindu and some colonial historians like Rev. Tyndale-Biscoe allege 'that the wholesale destruction of temples in Kashmîr was carried out by Sikandar'. The Kashmîrî Pandits have handed down these allegations from generation to generation. They believe that Sikander's reign of terror resulted in the mass conversion of Kashmîrî Hindus.

Many of them preferred to flee Kashmîr rather than give up Hinduism. The Pandits believe that just eleven families from their community stayed on in Kashmîr during Sikander's time. They add that all the other Pandits



fled the Valley in order to save their lives. They remained in other parts of India till the great Sultan Zain-ul-Abedin (1420-70) made it possible for them to return to Kashmir.

*The revisionist view:* However, 20<sup>th</sup> century historians like Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz and my friend and colleague Abdul Ahad 'History', who belong to the revisionist school, either dismiss these allegations altogether or put them in the correct perspective. Since the first historian to talk about the destruction of idols and/ or temples was Jonarāj, the revisionists question his credibility. Most mediæval histories written by Kashmiri Muslims in the Persian language<sup>2</sup> refer to King Sikander as the 'But Shikan' (idol breaker). Jonarāj wrote in Saṅskrit. It was not he who gave Sikander this Persian title. Besides, as we shall see later in this chapter, all subsequent accounts of the peaceful spread of Islām in Kashmir till 1459 are based on this resolutely secular historian: who was effusive in his praise of several Muslim kings. If we demolish him, then we lose all the evidence that he gives in support of the Islāmist/ secularist view. Above all, no historian, Hiṇḍū or Muslim, between the 15th and 19th centuries, has ever contradicted Jonarāj about this iconoclasm.

*Sikander was mostly a minor:* Some, like G.M.D. Sufi, point out that it was the infant Sikander's commander-in-chief and, later, Prime Minister Suhabhadd/ Malik Saif-ud-dīn, who was responsible.

Sufi says that Suhabhadd 'appears to be responsible for the destruction of a few temples... (He) set on foot a fierce persecution of the adherents of his old faith... probably, in order to show his zeal for his new religion. This sort of religious zeal is deplored by Islām... It is on record that Mīr Muhammad Hamadāni warned Suhabhadda against such action.'

Since Sikander was a minor during almost half his reign, it does seem unfair to hold him responsible for Suhabhadd's actions.

*Idols made during Sikander's era:* The most stunning evidence in defence of Sikander is a discovery made by archæologist Jawahar Lal Bhan. This is a four-headed idol of Lord Brahmā. Bhan found it in Srinagar's Ganesh Mandir. The eyes of the deity are elongated, which, Bhan writes, is 'a peculiarity of the tenth century A.D. sculptures.'

There is a two-line inscription in the Sarada (Shārdā) script behind this stone sculpture. It says that Kastavaka, son of Rahul, the Saṅgh-pati, consecrated the idol in the reign of 'Sakandara Saha' in the year 85. This was obviously the 85th year of Kashmir's own Laukik era. It corresponds

2 For example, Syed Ali's *Tārīkh e Kashmir* (1579), perhaps the first history of Kashmir written by a Kashmiri Muslim, respectfully refers to the king as 'Sultān Sikander (RA)... But Shikan' or 'Sultān Sikander (God bless him)... the idol-breaker.'



to 1409. This is when Sikander was king of Kashmîr. Therefore, too, 'Sakandara Saha' has to be King Sikander, the so-called idol breaker. (This, Bhan points out, is the first 'stone sculpture so far known in Kashmîr' which has a date on it.)

Apparently this idol was originally installed at Khrew. It was brought over to the said Ganesh Mandir in the Dogrâ period.

Bhan goes on to ask, 'Why [did] Sultan Sikandar spare the temples which were situated within the proximity of [Srinagar] city, namely, the temple of Purnadhishthana, modern Panderathan [sic], the temple of Shankarâchârya, etc., which are still intact<sup>3</sup>?...

'Why were Sultan Sikandar and his queen buried on the remains of an earlier temple retaining its shape, door and even sculptural panels, including Dwarapalas etc?'

Incidentally, Rahul is a Buddhist name and Sangh-pati ('the leader of a group of Buddhists') a Buddhist concept. Since at least the twentieth century some historians have tried to show that Hinduism and Buddhism were in conflict with each other. But the *Rājātaraṅginī* is full of Buddhists who built Hindu temples: and vice versa. This inscription also shows that there were Buddhists-and wealthy ones at that-in Kashmîr as late as in the fifteenth century. This flies in the face of pop-history, according to which the Shankarâchârya had wiped Buddhism off the face of Kashmîr (indeed of all South Asia) in the ninth century A.D. But here, six centuries later, we have a Sangh-pati called Rahul, who venerates Lord Brahmâ as well. Obviously, pop-histories are wrong.

*The correct perspective:* What about the 'correct perspective'? Moderate historians concede that Sikander and/ or Suhabhatt might indeed have gone overboard. This is because contemporary historians say so, because there is no evidence to believe otherwise and because the entire Kashmîrî Pandit community could not possibly have built all their customs and sects around a myth, that of their en masse migration during Sikander's reign. (See 'Kashmîrî Pandits' in 'The people of Kashmîr'.) However, as these historians point out, the Hindu kings who possibly destroyed Hîndû temples (see below) were no better.

The Gazetteer of India: Kashmîr region (1999) epitomises the correct perspective in its observation that '... some of the temples in the valley were

3 This, incidentally, is my own argument at the all-India level. If conversions to Islām were forcible, then why did mass conversions take place only at the extremities of the various Muslim empires? Why did they take place mainly in the NWFP, East Bengal, Assam, Keralâ, Lakshadweep and Kashmîr? Why not around the Muslims' capitals: Delhi, Lahore, Agra, Ahmednagar, Hyderabad, Lucknow and Mysore?



definitely destroyed and converted into mosques after the population of that particular locality converted to Islâm.'

### Iconoclasm before Sikander

Mediæval historians like Pandit Kalhan say that some kings like Jayapida (764-795) made ninety-nine Brâhmins 'seek death in water'. As we have seen, Shankar Varman (883-902) looted and cannibalised temples. Abhimanyu II (958-972) got his capital, including the temple of Vardhan Swami, burnt.

Kalhan says that Harsh 'despoiled' every single temple of its images. 'Despoilation' included spitting, defecation and urination on these idols. It was Jonarâj, a Hindu and a Brâhmin like Kalhan, who recorded for us how Rajadev forced the 'Bhattas' (Brâhmins) to disown the fact that they were Brâhmins. Dulchu, the commander-in-chief of King Karmen's army, plundered Kashmir around 1319, causing harm to 'innumerable gods'.

We have no reason to doubt Jonarâj when he says that during Sikander's era Suhabhatt broke 'images' in nine specific temples (notably Mârtañd) as well as others not specified. It is also probable that all but eleven Kashmiri Pandit families did, indeed, have to flee Kashmir because of Sikander/Suhabhatt. The latter is more likely to have been the villain, because Sikander himself had quite a few Hindus in his inner circle, including wife Shri Shobha Mahadevi and first minister Rai Magrey.

However, it is also certain that the Bhattas of Mahârâshtra and certain Konkan Brâhmins, who say that their ancestors were Kashmiri, had migrated much before Kashmir was ruled by Muslims-possibly during the reign of kings like Lalitâditya, Harsh and Rajadev (1213-1236).

So, did Hinduism and its temples go into a sudden decline because of rulers like Suhabhatt/Sikander (1389-1413)? Or because a substantial section of the population had converted to Islâm? Far from it. More than a century later, Mirza Haidar Dughlat (c.1541-51) would go into raptures about the 'more than one hundred and fifty idol temples' which existed 'in and around Kashmir' and which were 'first and foremost among the wonders of Kashmir'. Emperor Jehangir (1605-27), too, spoke of 'lofty idol temples... still (being) in existence'.

King Zain-ul-Abedin was widely praised by contemporâry Hindu historians for his concern for the well being of the Hindus. However, conversions continued. Notable converts of his era include the Khakha and Hatmâl Rajpûts of the area.

### Milestones in the history of conversion

The first recorded conversion of a Kashmiri to Islâm was that of King Rinchen. His brother-in-law Râvan Chandr and ten thousand others joined him. This was Kashmir's first mass-conversion. It happened in 1320, or perhaps a year before.



There are five major milestones in the history of conversions to Islām in Kashmīr. Three of these were mainly individual missions and two were collective efforts. The group efforts were those of the Rishis and the Bulbul Shah-Rinchen-Rāvan Chandr group. The three most influential individuals were the Shāh-é-Hamadān, Sheikh Nūr-ud-Dīn Rishī and Mīr Shams-ud-dīn Iraqi. (The Qādirīs of Baghdad played an important role in Kishtwār.) Within Sheikh Nūr-ud-Dīn Rishī's overall mission there were half a dozen sub-milestones, as we shall see.

The next major conversions after Rinchen were those made at the behest of the Shāh-é-Hamadān. The Shah is said to have induced thirty-seven thousand Kashmīris to convert to Islām some time between 1372 and 1381.<sup>4</sup>

In both cases, the saint who convinced people to convert had come from outside Kashmīr: from Central Asia (Turkestān and Irān), to wit. However, by 1400 or 1410 Islām-and Islāmic mysticism-had struck such deep roots in Kashmīr that thenceforth native-born mystics (the Muslim rishīs) took over the mission of spreading Islām. For some time both native-born rishīs and those from outside proselytised, the former increasingly outnumbering the latter. This continued till, say, the 1650s (the era of Syed Farid-ud-dīn Qādirī of Baghdad came to an end around that time). I can't think of any prominent Muslim missionary from abroad being active in Kashmīr after that. Kashmīr-born saints took over completely.

*The Sheikh-ul-Ālam:* Sheikh Nūr-ud-Dīn Rishī was born in Kaimoh, near Srinagar in 1377. Not only was he the first native-born mystic to cause the Kashmīris to convert to Islām, to date he remains the foremost among them. In his case it is not only the number of people he converted that stands out but also their spiritual eminence.

Bhum Sadh was already a renowned Brāhmin saint, famous for the miracles that he would perform, before he became Bāmuddīn under Sheikh Nūr-ud-Dīn's influence. When Bhum Sadh's followers saw that their spiritual leader had converted, they followed suit.

Tulī Rainā, was a prominent Hīndū leader of that era. The important Rainās of those days were mostly powerful feudal lords. However, Tulī

4 The Shāh also persuaded the then king of Kashmīr (Qutb-ud-dīn) to enforce the Shariat (Islāmic law). Ikram writes, 'The King used to wear Hindu style clothes. At the Shāh's behest he gave up this dress and started wearing clothes of the kind worn in Islāmic countries.' Incidentally, the Shah's companions converted even more Kashmīris. For example, Muhammad Kāzim Sāheb (@ Syed Qāzi) converted all of Letāporā. The Shah's son, Mīr Muhammad, spent at least twelve (according to some, twenty-two) years in Kashmīr, spreading the message of Islām.



Rainâ seems to have been a man of religion and high learning. The conversion of Bhum Sadh and his followers demoralised and irritated Tulî Rainâ and his group enormously. (See 'Bam Zoo' in the chapter on Ânañtnâg.) They met Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn to protest about his proselytisation drive. However, they wound up discussing the finer points of Islâm instead. By the end of the debate Tuli Rainâ and his 1,200 followers converted to Islâm.

A Brâhmin saint of Andarhâmâ has been mentioned elsewhere in this chapter. When he insisted on being buried the Muslim way, his followers took that as a signal that it was time for them to convert. Thus did another group conversion take place. Rupvan was one more village where Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn Rishî persuaded a large group to join him.

Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn's spiritual influence then crossed over to Kishtwâr—indeed to the royalty of that region. Zia Singh belonged to the line that ruled Kishtwar, which is in the Jammû province. He was the next among the Sheikh's prominent converts. As Zain-ud-dîn Walî he went on to acquire such enormous spiritual eminence that the large-hearted Sheikh would say 'Zainâ's devotion to God exceeds that of his tutor [i.e. the Sheikh himself].' (See 'Aish Muqâm' in the chapter on 'Ânañtnâg.')

The Sheikh's mission crossed the gender frontier as well. Because of his efforts a large number of women became Muslim saints. This seems to have been a major trend because neither before him nor after his time were there so many female saints.

The process of conversion to Islâm, through active proselytisation or because of the example of the rishîs, went on till the eighteenth century. Conversions after that were mostly the decisions of individual seekers.

#### **Why did the people of Kashmir convert to Islâm?**

For that matter, why did King Rinchen convert to Islâm? Jonarâj, himself a Kashmîrî Hindu, says that (the Buddhist) Rinchen tried to become a Shaivite Hindu but Shri Deva Swami and other ranking Hindu priests refused to accept him into their fold. Then Rinchen saw a dream in which he was advised to accept as his guide whoever he first saw the next day. This person turned out to be a Turkistani saint who identified himself as Abdur Rehman, but who is better known in Kashmir as Bulbul Shah (d. 1327).

This is recorded history. But serious historians dismiss such events as anecdotal. They tend to look for deeper causes, and in Kashmir there were several. The 'sword' (i.e. forcible conversion) was not one of them. Indeed, the whole process seems to have been extremely cordial and conducted in an atmosphere of seeking the truth. Today we see Hiñdûism and Islâm as distinct religions, and conversion from one to the other is seen as a huge transition. In the mediæval era that is not how the common man in Kashmir—or the native-born Muslim rishîs—saw it.



The conversion made no real difference to the converts' religious practices: Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn Rishî's early example and poetry followed the path of the rishîs: living in the woods and meditating in caves for long periods. His closest aides did the same.<sup>5</sup> This won them great respect among the people, Hiñdû as well as Muslim. Hiñdû ascetics were extremely comfortable with the Muslim rishîs' practices, because they were so similar to their own. Therefore, for many of them it made little difference whether they remained Hiñdûs or slid over to this form of Islâm. Ishaq Khân puts it in a scholarly manner thus, '...through the Rishis, [Islâm] allowed the main configuration of pre-existing Kashmîrî popular religion to adapt itself to the wider Islâmîc framework.'

Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn Rishî's discussion with Tuli Rainâ, as recorded for posterity, indicates that he won converts by explaining Islâm to them through metaphors of their existing religion. Khân says that the Rishis continued to narrate the pre-Muslim 'folk beliefs about creation that persisted among the converts.'

*Conversion in stages:* For some Kashmîrî families, especially those of learned Brâhmins, conversion was not a sudden process. It took place very gradually, over centuries. It would begin with the copying of the verses of Kashmîrî Muslim saints who were revered by both communities. The second step would be to accept the message of Islâm without converting formally. (This kind of a thing happened all over India.) The next would be to accept some Muslim practices, again without converting.

The Brâhmin saint of Andarhâmâ mentioned by the mediæval writer Bâbâ Nasîbuddîn Ghâzi was one such person. He became a close friend of Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn and was receptive to the Sheikh's ideas. When he died he insisted on being buried in the Islâmîc fashion, even though he remained a Hiñdû till his death.

*The people followed their leader's example:* The impact of Bhum Sadh's conversion was felt not just by his immediate followers but also by all Kashmîrîs who respected this Brâhmin saint. They started asking themselves, 'If Bhum Sadh, the greatest Hiñdû saint of our time, has crossed over to Islâm, should we not be doing the same?'

Tuli Rainâ was a major leader. 1,200 of his followers converted to Islâm when he did. Ladi (or Ludo) Rainâ was a powerful temporal chief in the Kishtwâr area who converted to Islâm as Latif-ud-Din. It is not clear if his

5 So did mystics of non-Kashmîrî origin, who came under the influence of the rishîs. Hazrat Syed Saleh [better known as Khân Sâheb] was one such. He was born in Pakhla (in present day Pâkistân). Thanks to Bâbâ Naseer-ud-Din Ghazi, he took to meditating in the woods. (See 'Budgâm.')



own subjects followed suit. However, a number of others did, when they saw this thitherto wealthy man adopt a life of extreme self-denial and austerity.

Sozan was a saint who belonged to the community of weavers. Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn converted him through religious debate. Sozan, in turn, persuaded the Hiñdûs of Prân Bhavan, whom he had served selflessly, to follow his example.

*Spiritual leaders were persuaded by their flock:* Often a group of Kashmiris would convert to Islâm while respected Hiñdû saints of that community would not. The newly converted Muslims would then make every effort to persuade their spiritual heroes to join them in Islâm. This seems to have been something of a trend, because Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn coined a proverb about it.

*Debate and dialogue:* Tuli Rainâ was one of those who converted after a Muslim saint (in this case Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn Rishî) convinced them through debate. Ladi Rainâ was the lord of the Mârû [Mârwâh]-Warhwan area where Kashmir borders Dodâ (Jammû). Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn Rishî convinced him not only about the Oneness of God but also about the futility of collecting material wealth.

And then there were the Brâhmins who were giving food and drinking water to departed souls by the bank of a river. This was another group that the Sheikh brought into the fold of Islâm through debate. He convinced them that it was better to feed the poor instead.

The disciples of Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn sought out Brâhmin saints, engaged them in discussions about God and succeeded in converting many of them.

*Setting an example:* Several people became Muslim rishîs because they admired the piety of those who had converted to Islâm. Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn Rishî's example, of course, won him thousands of followers. Gañgâ Bîbî converted because her husband, Lankar Mal, too, had done so. (More about Lankar later.)

*Social service:* Bâbâ Abdullâh is the best example. Not only did he construct a number of mosques, he also got many bridges and public baths built. This earned him the gratitude of the people, Hiñdû as well as Muslim. The people of Lari Bar village converted because of him. Hazrat Ganga Bâbâ Rishî got 360 mosques and as many culverts built. (See 'Budgâm.') Like Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn Rishî, Ganga Bâbâ got thousands of trees planted. Bâbâ Latîf-ud-Dîn Qazi was another saint who served his fellow men selflessly. (Also see 'Budgâm.')

*Seekers:* Some, like Kati Pandit, came on their own. Kati had heard of Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn Rishî's austerities, as well as of the saint's 'sense of guilt and feeling of sin.' He thought that the Sheikh's example represented 'a new



and better life.<sup>iii</sup> This made him seek the saint out. Kati joined the Sheikh's fold, with the name of Qutubuddîn.

The Brâhmin saint Dariyâ Rishî was another seeker. He sought out Bâbâ Shukuruddîn, himself a recent convert, who granted an interview most reluctantly, and only after repeated requests from Dariyâ. Abdul Shukur, also originally a Hiñdû Brâhmin, was a third. He was an admirer of Batamâlû Sâheb (18th century). Ishaq Khân points out that this seeker 'expressed his intention of becoming a Muslim during [Batamâlû Sâheb's] lifetime. But it was only after the death of [Batamâlû Sâheb] that he affirmed his faith in Islâm.' This shows that the Muslim rishîs were in no hurry to convert. The seeker, too, often spent several years pondering over his decision before he formally converted.

(Individual decisions to convert must have been very difficult because of pressures from members of the previous religion. That is why individual seekers spent years in internal debate. Sheikh Suleiman Kashmîrî is the best example of this. After his conversion to Islâm, he earned a name for being able to recite the Holy Qur'ân from memory. His conversion annoyed his older friends and relatives. They began to harass him. When the harassment became unbearable he went to Kolât to meet the Shâh-é-Hamadân and join his inner circle.

(Converting in a group, therefore, must have been much easier for all members of that village or caste. For that reason, decisions to convert in groups were infinitely faster.)

*Absolution:* At least some wealthy people, like the dissolute Lankar Mal, converted to Islâm out of a sense of guilt and to expiate for their sins. (His wife, Ganga, went on to become one of Kashmîr's most important Muslim saints.)

*Miracles:* Scholars (notably Ishaq Khân) tend to dismiss the role of miracles (performed by Muslim saints) in the spread of Islâm. And yet when we go through histories such as Hassan's 19th century *Tazkarâ-é-Auliya-é-Kashmîr* the unmistakeable impression is that several mass conversions took place when the people were overawed by some miracle performed by a Muslim saint. Not all of these miracles were benign. Many of them were painful punishments awarded to those who had done something wrong.

Bhum Sadh is one of the most prominent Kashmîrîs who converted to Islâm because of miracles. When still a Hiñdû, he got into a debate with Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn Rishî about the validity of monotheism. He asked the Sheikh to prove that there was only one God. The Sheikh miraculously made the idols present in the room start speaking about the Oneness of God. This miracle overwhelmed Bhum Sadh. He accepted Islâm at once.



Zia Singh of the Kishtwâr royal family, too, converted because of an elaborate series of miracles. He fell seriously ill in his early youth. Apparently his mother vowed that she would convert to Islâm if her son were cured. Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn Rishî is said to have healed the youth, who later acquired great spiritual fame as Zainuddîn. (See also 'Aish Muqâm' in the chapter on 'Ānañnâg.') Ladi Rainâ was another important disciple who had been cured by the Sheikh before his conversion.

*Rural performing artistes disseminated the message:* News that the Sheikh had scored over Bhum Sadh in the debate started spreading throughout rural Kashmir. The finer points of the debate between the two were difficult for the common man to understand, leave alone recount. It is possible that the whole story about the idols talking about One God was a simplified way of saying, 'In the debate the Sheikh's monotheism prevailed over Bhum Sadh's beliefs.'

Stories of this kind were taken from village to village by rural minstrels, dancers, acrobats and wandering saints—the bhāñds, the dambāels, maets and faqirs.

Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn's own songs became very popular all over Kashmir. They, too, spread the message of Islâm.

*The message was simple and accessible:* In Kashmir, especially during Sheikh Nûr-ud-Dîn's time, Islâm spoke the language of the people: Kashmirî. Besides, as mentioned, the message was conveyed through simple songs and stories.

*A people ripe for conversion:* P.V. Mathew feels that 'the interference of Tantrins in Kashmir administration weakened Kashmir. The people who had suffered them in the hands of Tantrins and Damaras [both being powerful clans], were anxiously looking for a way out, when in the days of Sahadev the sûfis of Islâm entered Kashmir. The people fell easy prey to the new preachers and there was mass conversion to Islâm.'

*Was conversion a revolt against the caste system/ 'Brâhmanic tyranny?* At the all-India level my research shows that the overwhelming majority of people who converted were the skilled backward castes: leather workers, weavers, tailors, barbers, butchers and the makers of all kinds of handicrafts. The very poorest (e.g. scavengers) converted only in a few cases. The same is true of the upper castes: the Brâhmins, Râjpûts, Jâts, Baniâs and Jains. Large-scale conversions from these castes to Islâm did not take place. At the all-India level (which includes Bâñglâ Dêsh and Pâkistân's West Punjâb) my conclusion is that the Hiñdûs who converted to Islâm were those talents who had been stifled by the caste system. These were the elite of what we now call the scheduled castes and some castes now included in the 'other backward castes' category.



Does this hold true of Kashmīr? Or for that matter Pākistān's Balūchistān and North West Frontier Province? In all three cases conversions were near-total (90% or above). So, were conversions to Islām in these three cases, too, a way of escaping the caste-system? At least in the case of Kashmīr this is not correct. In no state of undivided India did the so-called 'untouchable' population exceed twenty per cent. (Individual districts are another matter. In the Jammū and Kathuā districts the scheduled caste population is much higher than the all-India norm, being 28% and 23% respectively. Yet these are the two districts of the State where the fewest conversions to Islām took place.)

True, Sheikh Nūr-ud-Dīn Rishī himself belonged to a so-called 'low-caste' before his conversion to Islām. It is also true that his poetry occasionally spoke out against what critics like Ishaq Khān call 'the weight of Brāhmanic tyranny.' His message, with its emphasis on the dignity of labour, gave great comfort to the working classes. Some Brāhmins even opposed his mission, alarmed by his success in winning converts, especially from the Hīndū elite.

However, not only such Kashmīrī Brāhmins as had converted to Islām but also those who remained Hīndūs played an important role in popularising the verses of Sheikh Nūr-ud-Dīn Rishī. They started copying the poetry of the saint in the Shārdā (Kashmīrī) script; and continued to do so till the seventeenth century. Thus, Brāhmins who opposed the Sheikh were few and far between. The majority of Kashmīr's Brāhmins (Hīndū as well as newly-converted Muslim) supported him-and most enthusiastically.

True, upward social mobility was a powerful incentive for many underclass Hīndūs. Shanga Bibi, the female saint, for example, had been a commercial sex-worker before her conversion-and, later, sainthood. Sozan had been a weaver and, thus, a 'low caste.' However, the Hīndūs had accepted him as a saint well before he became a Muslim. He seemed to have had no problems with the Hīndū religion. The Hīndū social order, on the other hand, was a very different thing.

Most importantly, Kashmīrī Muslims were not above caste, either. Several underclass groups, especially the hānjīs, dombs, dambels and maets continued to languish at the bottom of the society even after conversion. Muslims from higher-ranking groups would not dream of marrying into these groups. But in some ways they were better off after their conversion. They could now dine at feasts with elite Muslims. Besides, at least in theory they were the equals of the Syeds. Hīndūism did not permit that even in theory.

Therefore, it is not at all surprising that those at the very bottom of the social and economic ladder converted almost two centuries after the elite did. The first people to convert were the Brāhmins and the Kashmīrī and Ladākhī castes corresponding to the highest Rājput. Rinchen Shāh was not



just from the ruling caste, he was a Gyâpo (a tiny caste that consists of Ladâkhî royalty). Râvan Chandr, too, belonged to royalty. They converted in 1319 or 1320. Ikrâm emphasises that Bulbul Shâh converted the king and several nobles (*umrâ*) to Islâm.

The majority of Brâhmins either converted around the same time or a few decades later. A Hiñdû historian records that 2 ½ maunds of *janêu thread* (sacred thread) were burnt when the Shâh-é-Hamadân converted Hiñdûs to Islâm en masse in the 1370s. Only Brâhmins wear this sacred thread.

The truly underprivileged boatmen of Srinagar, on the other hand, converted only around 1500, and had Mîr Shams-ud-dîn Iraqi not come along their conversion might have taken place even later.

So, do these conversions suggest a revolt against 'the weight of Brâhmanic tyranny'?

Indeed, the events recounted in the last few pages show how the Brâhmins and the Rainâs were the first to convert. Other prominent elite converts included the priests of the temple of Uttar, and Latîfuddîn, a Rainâ chief. (Today the Rainâs are all seen as Brâhmins. However, my own researches suggest that at least some of them-if not the majority-held the same status and professions as Râjpûts elsewhere.) What we notice is a very civilised process of debate and discussion, with the Brâhmins listening to (and often seeking out) Muslim missionaries with an open mind. To explain conversions in Kashmir as a revolt against 'the weight of Brâhmanic tyranny' is to devalue the spiritual appeal of Islâm and the persuasive powers of its missionaries.

### The Spread of Shiism

Mîr Shams-ud-dîn Iraqi came to Kashmir from Tâlish (Central Asia) in 1487. He was the next major preacher who was able to persuade 'thousands of people', particularly the Rainâs, to convert. The Mîr was either a Shia or a Noor Bakhshi

The Noor Bakhshis are a sect that tries to find common ground between the Shias and the Sunnis. (See 'The advent of Islâm' and 'Disintegration' in 'The History of Kargil' in the volume on 'Leh and Kargil.' It will be seen from those sections that the ideological ancestry of the Noor Bakhshis, and thus of the Mîr, can be traced to the Sunni Syed Ali Hamadâni. Therefore, there are problems in classifying the Noor Bakhshis, and thus the Mîr, as Shias. In fact, the Noor Bakhshis and the Shias have major differences on the issue of Muharram mourning.)

Drew wrote in his 19th century *Jammu and Kashmir Territories* that the Noor Bakhshis were 'a division of the Baltis... [In] their mode of prayer [they] follow one who stands in front, which, apparently the other Shias do not.'



So, if the Mîr was a Noor Bakhshi and not a Shia, why would he convert people to the Shia sect? On the face of it this does defy reason. Therefore, I can only guess. Prof. M Amin Andrabi used to mention a debate that took place in mediæval times about the creed of the Shâh-é-Hamadân. This controversy raged for years.

No one in the history of Kashmîr has converted more people to the Sunni sect of Islâm than did the Shâh. Then how can there be any doubt about the sect that he belonged to? But doubts there were. Many mediæval scholars insisted that the Shâh was a Shia but propagated the Sunni sect instead. This was because he noticed that the Sunni sect had already struck roots in Kashmîr. Apparently, the Shâh reasoned that it was more important to spread Islâm than any particular sect.<sup>6</sup>

Could it be that the Mîr had similarly decided that since the Noor Bakshîs had no base in Kashmîr the next best would be to work in the cause of Shiism. The Mîr was one of the most active Muslim missionaries in the history of Kashmîr. Some scholars feel that in the matter of converting people to Islâm he was even more pro-active than the Shâh. To the extent that he actively sought converts in Srinagar, rural Budgâm and some other parts of the Valley, this might be true. However, in terms of numbers converted, it would seem that the Shâh had an edge.

Sheikh Abdullah Qumî was a contemporary of the Mîr, and Syed Hassan was the Mîr's successor. These were the other two missionaries who helped spread Shiism in Kashmîr.

The Mîr was first buried near the Imâmbârâ of Jadibal (Srinagar). Later his tomb was shifted to Chadoora (Budgâm). Dr Sufî says that this was done 'to avoid desecration by non-Shias'.

Some prejudiced Hindu and Muslim historians of today assume that the Hindus and Muslims were enemies in the past. So do some Shia and Sunni historians about their sects. They claim that the great Sheikh Hamzâ Makhdoom (1494-1576) 'exercised a considerable check on Shiism', the spread of which (through Mîr Shams-ud-dîn Iraqi) 'alarmed the Sunnis'. The Sheikh was a descendant of Chandravanshi Rajpûts and a mystic of the Kubrawi order.

6 My own conclusion, which is backed by Sheikh Muhammad Ikrâm's 1941 classic *Âb-é-Kâusar*, is that the Shah was a Tafzîli. This is an ideology that tries to act as a bridge between the Shias and Sunnis. Like the Sunnis (which sect they essentially lean towards) they respect all the Companions of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). However, their extreme love and respect for Hazrat Ali is unique among the Sunnis, and brings them close to the Shias. Thus, the Shah was certainly not a Shia, even though he was well disposed towards that sect. My take is that the Shâh knew that it was more important to spread Islâm through the Sunni sect, which already had struck some roots, than to work only for the Tafzili ideology.



But things were never as black and white as that: Shia vs. Sunni, us vs. them. Bâbâ Khalilullah, a leading Shia saint, was on the same side of the political fence as Makhdoom Sâheb. On the other were the Chaks, who happened to be Shias. However, the Chak sultan's daughter was married to the Sunni Baihaqi. Mughal emperor Jehangir's closest ally in Kashmir was a Shia aristocrat called Malik Haidar Chadoora.

### Proselytisation

Today Makhdoom Sâheb's mausoleum on the Hari Parbat/ Koh é mârâñ, first built in 1713, is considered one of the most powerful in all Kashmir. In his lifetime the saint got several mosques built in Kashmir, travelled all over the Valley to proselytise and was known for mystic practices such as holding his breath for long periods.

In Kishtwâr, Islâm was mainly propagated by Syed Farid-ud-dîn Qâdiri (born c.1592 in Baghdad), his four companions and two sons. They set into motion a process which resulted in the majority of the people of Kishtwâr converting to Islâm. The example of Syed Farid's son, Syed Asrar-ud-dîn (died in 1685 in Kishtwâr), was an important factor.

The most notable convert was Kirat Singh. He became the king of Kishtwâr in 1681. Emperor Aurangzeb renamed him Sâdat Yar Khân in 1687. His family and many of his subjects followed suit. (See also the section on 'Kishtwâr' in the chapter on 'Dodâ'.) The main temple of Kishtwâr, in the heart of the town, became a mosque-with the tomb of Farid-ud-dîn Sâheb inside it.

Islâm continued to gain converts in the state during Afghân and even Dogrâ (Hindu) rule. The Afghâns appointed several Kashmirî Pandits to high office, in Srinagar as well as Kabul. Not one of these senior officials converted to Islâm in order to obtain, or retain, his position. However, in the villages some Pandits accepted Islâm after the example of the missionaries. Significant among these was a Kashmirî Pandit from Rajwer (and, later, Sovarah). Around 1760, he became a Muslim, with the name Sheikh Abdullah. Almost two centuries later, his eponymous descendant became the Prime Minister, and later Chief Minister, of the state.

The spread of Islâm in districts like Jammû and Kathuâ is one of the finest examples of the composite culture of our sub-continent. It is also evidence that Islâm did not need the sword, or even state patronage, to flourish. The population of these districts was, through most of history, mainly Hindu. Muslims did not ever rule either district. (One king of Jammû did go through the motions of converting to Islâm, though. His children, who ruled after him, remained Hîndûs.) Yet, village after village in both districts has been named after relatively recent Muslim saints and landlords.



Some villages, like Sidhra, take their names from purely Islāmic concepts. The Mahārājā named several important residential areas in Jammū town after Muslim clans and individuals, notably his own Ustad (teacher). Every Thursday, to this day, Hindus and Sikhs vastly outnumber Muslims at the several dozen shrines of Muslim saints.

Equally significantly, some powerful Hindus, including Rajpûts, converted to Islām even when their fellow Rajpût Hindus, the Dogrās, were in power in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

### The Rishi Movement

In Islām, saints, priests and clergymen are expected to marry, unlike, say, Catholic and Buddhist monks or even some Hindu divines. And yet several sufi sects insist on celibacy. The (Muslim) rishīs of Kashmīr are one such sect. Khwaja Owais, who was a contemporary of Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, founded what, in Kashmīr, came to be called the rishī order. The Khwaja lived, with his mother to whom he was devoted, in a village called Kurun in Yemen. Such was the respect the Holy Prophet had for the Khwaja that he refused to lead his army to Yemen. When asked why, the Prophet (PBUH) would say, 'The odour of God comes from Yemen.'

The Khwaja would have been an early sufi—certainly not the first or even the second, because those were Hazrat Ali and Hassan Basri respectively. It was Sheikh Nūr-ud-Dīn Wali who founded in Kashmīr the movement named after the rishīs (the Saṅskrit word for Hindu hermits). He wanted the rishīs to create a society where 'peace between neighbours and people begins with peace within individuals, combining the delights of solitude with manual labour for the community'.

The Rishis were strict vegetarians. Like Hindu and Jain vegetarians they would not eat onions or garlic either. None of them drank alcohol or did drugs. They mainly lived on wild herbs, especially the lettuce-like wopul hak, which they gathered as they wandered through the woods.

The Rishi movement was at its peak in the 16th century. According to Abul Fazl, the 16th century Mughal historian, there were nearly two thousand rishīs in Kashmīr. Both Firishta and he have written that the rishīs lived on berries and the wild fruit of the mountains. The rishīs mostly stayed in caves or at least in the woods. They would not wear more than one garment, even if it were in tatters. The rishīs would also not talk to the people unless absolutely necessary.

In most Eastern (Hindu, Muslim, Jain and Buddhist) religions it is considered pious and godly to go to extremes of austerity and self-abnegation. The rishīs would do this.



Abul Fazl added, 'The most respectable people of (Kashmir) are the Rishis, who, though they do not suffer themselves to be fettered with traditions, are doubtless true worshippers of God. They revile not any other sect, and ask for nothing of anyone. They plant the roads with fruit trees, to furnish the traveller with refreshment. They abstain from flesh, and have no intercourse with the other sex.'

Emperor Akbar's army was defeated by Kashmir's Chak kings the first three times that it tried to conquer Kashmir in the 1580s. The Kashmiris believe that it were the prayers of Rishi Malu that ensured this. In fact, almost the entire Rishi sect had prayed for Akbar's defeat. (See also the section on Anantnâg district.)

Jehangir wrote about the rishis in much the same vein as his father Akbar's biographer, Abul Fazl, '(The Muslim rishis) have no religious knowledge or learning of any sort. Yet they possess simplicity and are without pretence. They abuse no one. They restrain the tongue of desire and the foot of seeking. They eat no flesh, they have no wives, and always plant fruit bearing trees in the fields, so that men may benefit from them, themselves desiring no advantage.' Jehangir, too, estimated their number at 2,000.

There have been some great sufi saints-even rishis-in Kashmir in the twentieth century. However, many scholars feel that there have been no genuine rishis since the 17th century, possibly the result of Akbar's hostility towards them. (But then again various subsequent Mughal emperors had granted them lands and convents.) In the centuries that followed, such rishis as were left were mostly 'the guardians of the tombs of some former canonised saints of their order.'

### The way of Rishis

The Rishis did not have a codified creed. However, some mediæval scholars, notably Mulla 'Ali Rainâ<sup>iv</sup> recorded the essential features of their path. These are:

- i) The goal is to worship God.
- ii) The only desire that a rishî has is to see (or come close to) God.
- iii) This is to be done by means of fasts and self-denial. This includes giving up sex and other sensual pleasures. Thus, good food is ruled out. Even the quantity of food to be eaten has to be the barest minimum. This self-denial is so extreme that the rishis do not allow themselves to talk more or sleep longer than is absolutely necessary. This cleans up the body as well as the soul.



- iv) They deny themselves the company of their fellow men because this interferes with their spiritual pursuits. And when one of them finds himself in a situation in which he is not able to run away from human company, he feels guilty for days on end for having allowed himself this indulgence.

Some sūfī orders elsewhere, too, believe in self-denial. In India, Hīndū and Jain monks sometimes go to such extremes. Among the Christians, the Trappists are the closest parallel. The Buddhist monastery at Rizong in Leh imposes almost identical austerities on its monks: including eating just one meal a day and staying away from fellow men to the extent possible.

- v) Prayer is a very private affair. It is not something to do while others are watching. Nor are piety and mystical practices something to be shown off.
- vi) The rishīs do not make an effort to perform miracles. However, because they are so exalted spiritually, they often wind up performing miracles during the course of their activities.
- vii) They believe that only God knows what lies inside anyone's soul.
- viii) If any material goods are given to a rishī, or to an order of rishīs, it is ensured that these things are immediately passed on to the poor.
- ix) Within Islām a wide variety of interpretations and practices is possible. The rishīs have their own interpretation. However, their practices do not go beyond the boundaries of Islām.

Islām does not lay any great store by renunciation or extremes of asceticism. Initially Sheikh Nūr-ud-Dīn Rishī spent great time in forests and meditating in a cave. His early poetry-and example-encouraged such austerity. However, later, under the influence of the Kubrawīs, he gave up this rishī practice. His later poetry was critical of asceticism.

#### *Kashmīrī Sufism: Distinctive Features*

There are four schools of sufism. These are the Chishtī, Suharwardī, Qādirī and Naqshbandī orders. All the sufīs of the world belong to one or another of these orders. Kashmīr is perhaps the only exception to this rule in the entire Muslim world. Many of its rishīs owe allegiance to none of these orders.

Some visitors from Iran once clubbed the various sufi schools of the world into two categories: the Indian/ Pākistānī way and the Middle Eastern/ Iranian way. When they came to Kashmīr they remarked that Kashmīr seemed to represent a third approach, a third way, quite different from the other two. The Iranian visitors noted that Kashmīrī sufism has an Iranian base but its practices are neither Iranian nor mainland Indian. However, if anything, they are closer to Iran.



For instance, in mainland India flowers are offered at tombs. This does not happen at the Muslim shrines of Kashmir and Iran. Most shrines in the Islâmic world are built around the tomb of an important saint. In Iran, Iraq and Kashmir a turban (amâma) is placed on or perched above the head of the grave of the saint. It is not so in the rest of South Asia.

In the rest of India (including Jammû) the devotee enters through the main door and the grave (mazâr) of the saint is right in front. Thus the common man can go right up to the grave and touch it. In Iran and Kashmir the grave is normally surrounded by a rectangular enclosure (*qubbâ*). This enclosure is normally like a room within a larger room. Its walls are normally made of elegantly carved wood. Lattice-or fret-work is deliberately used in these walls. That way the walls become fairly transparent and the devotee can see the grave(s) inside through the holes in the fretwork. The ziyarats of Jammû, e.g. Shahdra Sharief, do not have such enclosures.

Incidentally, shrines are called dargahs and mazârs in the rest of India, Pâkistân and even Afghânistân. In Kashmir (and to a lesser extent in Jammû) they are called mostly called ziyârats, a word that is used as the verb for pilgrimage in many other Islâmic lands. The word dargah is used in Kashmir—certainly in Srinagar city—to describe just one shrine, Hazratbal. The only shrine in Kashmir called mazâr that I can think of is Srinagar's Bat (rice) Mazâr. In Kashmir the word mazâr is mostly used to describe exclusive cemeteries.

Devotees who pay homage at Kashmîri and Irani shrines are often found wailing. They call out loud (to God or to the patron saint) and read out their *munâjât* (supplications) for at least the people sitting next to them to hear. In the rest of India people pray silently.

The Muslims of almost all of India (except Jammû and Kashmir) and Pâkistân are Chishtis. In Kashmir and Jammû this is the only order that is not represented by even a single shrine. Even the Qâdirîs are to be found mainly in Jammû.

*The third (Kashmîri) way:* Most Rishis belong to none of the four silsilas of sufism. This is true of Bâbâ Réshî, Nund Rishi, Zain Shah Sâheb and many others. On the other hand, some Kashmîri mystics belong to the traditional orders. Thus Makhdoom Sâheb was a Suharwardy. Of the sufis from outside, Dastgîr Sâheb was a Qâdirî, Naqshband Sâheb, naturally, a Naqshbandi and Shâh-é-Hamadân a Kubrawî (a sub-sect of the Suharwardys).



# References

- i Mentioned by Muhammad Ashraf Fāzili in *Junūbī Hindustān mein Islām ki Ibtidā* (Urdu), Islāmīc Productions, Buchhpora, Srinagar 190011. (Year not stated, but around 2002.)
- ii Sheikh Muhammad Ikrām, *Āb-é-Kausar* (1941), Farīd Book Depot, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002.
- iii Both quotes from Khān, Ishaq, op cit
- iv Mohammad Ishaq Khān, *Kashmīr's Transition to Islām*; Manohar, New Delhi, third edition: 2002.



## The Islâmic Shrines of Kashmîr

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Some of the more important Muslim shrines of Kashmîr are mentioned below. Most of them have been named after the patron saint, who is often (but not always) buried inside the shrine. There are more detailed notes about almost all these shrines in the chapters on their respective districts.

### Ânañtnâg

Aish Muqâm, on the road to Pahalgâm  
 Bâbâ Dawood Ghani at Vailoo  
 Bâbâ Hyder Réshî in Ânañtnâg town  
 Bâbâ Naseer-ud-Din Ghazi at Bijbehara.  
 Bam Zoo, on the road to Pahalgâm  
 Harut and Marut on the Mattan karewa  
 Hazrat Noor Shâh Baghdadi at Kund  
 Hazrat Sheikh Syed Samnani at Kulgam  
 Kâbâ Marg  
 Khiram Sirhâmâ  
 Scer Hamadân, on the road to Pahalgâm

### Bârâmullâ

Âsâr Sharief at Khwâjâ Sâheb, Bârâmullâ  
 Bâbâ Jangi at Shilwat, Sonâwârî  
 Bâbâ Réshî near Gulmarg  
 Bâbâ Shakur-ud-din Sâheb at Watlab  
 Bâbâ Usman Ghani ziârat at Jahama, Bârâmullâ  
 Dastgîr Sâheb at Plan, Bandipore  
 Dastgîr Sâheb at Qazi Hamam, Bârâmullâ  
 Hazrat Mîr Syed Ali Hamadâni, Khânqâh-e-Mu'ala at Sopore



Hazrat Sultân-ul-Arifeen at Aham Sharief, Bandipore  
 Hazrat Sultân-ul-Arifeen at Ramporâ, Bandipore  
 Hazrat Sultân-ul-Arifeen at Tujar, Sopore  
 Hazrat Syed Ahmed-ud-Din Sâheb at Bulgam, Bâramullâ  
 Hazrat Syed Sâheb at Kreeri  
 Imâmbârâ at Mohalla Sona Buran, Inderkote, Sonâwârî  
 Karim Shâh Sâheb at the Qadeem Idgâh, Bâramullâ  
 Khwâjâ Hilal Naqshband Sâheb at Nsasbal, Sonâwârî  
 Khwâjâ Rahim Sâheb at Chewa, Sonâwârî  
 Sofî Satar Sâheb at Chakla, Rafiabad  
 Syed Ghareeb Sâheb at Gund Nowgam, Sonâwârî  
 Syed Hazrat Sultân at Kanisporâ  
 Syed Jânâbâz Wali at Khânporâ, Bâramullâ  
 Syed Kirmani in Bâramullâ  
 Syed Malik Bukhârî Sâheb at Nadihal, Bâramullâ  
 Syed Muhammad Dâniyâl at Talarzoo, Sonâwârî  
 Syed Sâheb at Naid Khai, Sonâwârî

### Budgâm

Alamdar-e-Kashmîr's ziârat at Hamchaporâ  
 Bâbâ Latif-ud-Din Qazi at Poshkar  
 Hazrat Ganga Bâbâ Rishi at Palaporâ (Poshkar)  
 Hazrat Saleh at Khân Sâheb  
 Hazrat Syed Zia-ud-Din Bukhârî at Kanihama  
 Imâmbârâ at Budgâm  
 Sham Ded at Poshkar  
 Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Rishi at Tsrâr [or Chrar]-e-Sharief  
 Syed Muhammad Samri at Lassaporâ  
 Syeds Taj-ud-Din and Alla-ud-Din at Sikandarporâ

### Kupwâra

Bâbâ Abdullah Gazi in Kralporâ Guzrail  
 Mîr Muhammad Ibrahim at Kanthporâ, Lolâb  
 Parkash Akhoon in Gurhi  
 Zati Shâh in Muqâm near Drugmulla



**Pulwâmâ**

Mantaqi Sâheb at Awantipur  
 Akber Deen Sâheb at Dâdasar  
 Hazrat Ameer Kabeer Shâh-é-Hamadân at Drumbal  
 Sheikh Bairzid Shimmagi above Payer  
 Âsâr Sharief at Pinjoora  
 Jâmâ Masjid at Shopian  
 Shâh-é-Hamadân at Trâl  
 Hazrat Mîr Syed Muhammad Hamadâni at Trâl Pâîñ

**Srînagar City**

Âsâr Sharief, Kalashpurâ  
 Âlî Masjid  
 Aishan Sâheb  
 Akheon Mulla Shâh  
 Bat Mazâr  
 Batamâloo Sâheb  
 Bulbul Lankar  
 Dastgîr Sâheb  
 Hasanabad mosque  
 Hazratbal  
 Jâmâ Masjid  
 Jenâb Sâheb, Soura  
 Khwâjâ Habib Ullah Attar  
 Madni Sâheb  
 Makhdoom Sâheb  
 Mirza Kâmil  
 Naqshband Sâheb  
 Naushehra  
 Patther Masjid  
 Rozabal  
 Shâh-é-Hamadân

**Srînagar district**

Lâl Bâb Shâh at Zakûrâ  
 Qamar Sâheb at Salora, Ganderbal  
 Shâh Sadiq Qalander at Wutta, Lâr  
 Wâñgat Sharief at Wâñgat, Kangan



## The Kashmîrî Pandits: Some important religious beliefs

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### Kashmîrî Shaivism

*Pristine Hiñdûism:* Justice Katju writes, 'The Kashmîrî Brahmans are the only remnant left of the Hindus of Kashmîr...[They] have shown an amazing tenacity in sticking to their Vedic and Tañtrik heritage. Their shakha [branch] is Kath and their [scripture] veda is Krishna Yajurveda. Their *grihya sutra* which controls their rituals is Laughakshi, which certainly goes back prior to the Mahâbharata era.' Katju feels that the Kashmîrî Pandits are the only section of the Hindu community in India 'which has kept up its Vedic and Tañtrik heritage in all its purity unaffected by [the reform movements of later centuries].'

Kashmîrî Shaivism originated around the eighth or ninth century A.D. and continued to develop till the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> It tried to resolve various religious and philosophical issues that older schools of Hiñdû thought had been unable to.

The Kashmîrî Pandits believe that Lord Shiv had earlier sent down sixty-four schools of thought (Bhairav-tañtrs). However, over the millennia these disappeared, mainly through disuse. So, Lord Shiv asked Durvasas, a saint, to rejuvenate these systems of learning. Durvasas, in turn, delegated this task to his 'spiritual sons.' They revived the systems or schools called Triambaka, Amardaka and Shrinath. Kashmîrî Shaivism is based on Triambaka. This is a 'monistic' philosophy, which is to say that it believes that reality is a unified whole and that all existing things can be ascribed to

<sup>1</sup> The Kashmîrî Overseas Association's website (*Tantricism in Kashmîr*) by Acharya Dina Nath Shastri) says that the Shaivite philosophy emerged as early as in the 6th century. This is an interesting departure from the dates conventionally accepted, but no evidence has been given in support of this claim.



or described by a single concept or system. It rejects the view that mind and matter are formed by, or are reducible to, the same ultimate substance or principle of being.<sup>1</sup>

As part of the revival of the faith, Lord Shiv revealed seventy-seven Shiv Sûtrs to Shri Vâsûgupt in the early ninth century A.D. on the Mahâdev mountain near Srinagar. The story more or less echoes Moses' experience. The Lord visited the saint in a dream and said that the scripture had been etched on a rock. The saint found the rock and started spreading the message throughout Kashmir.

Kashmîrî Shaivism is based on this scripture. It has also been influenced heavily by the Tâñtrik literature of the day and by the *tañtr* of the Buddhists.

Kashmîrî Shaivism is also known as Northern Shaivism, Pratyabhijna Darshan ('the philosophy of identification') and Trika-shâsan ('the Trika school'). Trika means 'three' or 'threefold.' Threes are auspicious in Hîndûism in general and Shaivism in particular. Lord Shiv belongs to the divine trinity (Lord Brahmâ and Lord Vishnû are the other two members). He carries a trident. The 'three' of Trika also alludes to the three aspects of the Divine: shiv (divine benevolence), shaktî (power, energy) and the soul.

The Kashmîrî Pandits have, over the centuries, had a large number of important Gurûs and saints. That is because Kashmîrî Shaivism attaches enormous importance to meditation by devotees under the supervision of Gurûs. Meditation is the method through which the devotee becomes conscious of God (Shiv).

**The Agams:** There are many schools within Shaivism. The Agams are doctrines which are the basis of (and are common to) all these schools. They lay down that Shiv is the Supreme God. He accepts prayers and can be reached through yog(a).

The Agams broadly consist of the following doctrines: i) the five powers of Lord Shiv: creation, preservation, destruction, revelation and concealment; ii) the three categories: pati, pashu and pasha [God, soul and bonds]; iii) the three bonds: anav, karm and mâyâ; iv) the three-fold power of Lord Shiv: ichhâ, kriyâ and gyân-shaktî; v) the thirty-six tattvs, or categories of existence, derived from the five elements of God; vi) the need for a satgurû (true master) and initiation (into religious practices); vii) the power of mañtr(a) (religious incantation); viii) the four pads: charya, kriyâ, yog(a) and gyân.<sup>ii</sup>

### **Tañtr(a)/ Tâñtrism**

Lord Shiv has five mouths, Ishân, Tatpurush, Sadyojata, Vâmdev and Aghora. Each of these personifies one of his five energies, which respectively are Chit-shaktî (consciousness), Ânañd-shaktî (joy), Ichhâ-shaktî (volition), Gyân-shaktî (wisdom) and Kriyâ-shaktî (conduct). The science of Tañtr came



out of the Lord's five mouths. His five energies unite with and control each other. Together they have enunciated the sixty-four schools mentioned earlier. These sixty-four Bhairav-taṅtras together make up Kashmîrî Shaivism and the Trika school.

What is Taṅtra(a)? The word taṅtra means 'ingredient,' 'temporal power,' 'enjoyment/ pleasure' and 'possessions.' But it also means 'determination,' 'decisive intentions,' 'the goal' and 'the solution.' These seemingly contradictory meanings reveal the essence of taṅtra : that it links sex with spirituality.

Swati Chopra<sup>iii</sup> says that the word taṅtra is a combination of the first syllables of the Saṅskrit words *tanoti* and *trayati*. 'Tanoti' means 'to expand the consciousness' while 'trayati' means 'to liberate the consciousness.' She adds that taṅtra is 'a science of sexuality/ ecstasy' that has been practiced not only in India and Tibet, but also in most indigenous cultures of the world.

However, in the context of Kashmîr, sexual and occult practices are played down. Justice Katju writes, '[Taṅtra Shâstr] is one of the most misunderstood subjects not only in India but throughout the world. In popular thought and imagination a Tâṅtrik is a person who dabbles in strange, awful and mysterious rites involving visits to cremation grounds and [the] use of wine and women. He is feared also because he is credited with powers of inflicting harm as also of bringing relief and good fortune... [The] earnest Tâṅtrik practitioner avoids being caught in the mesh of sidhis and keeps his eyes fixed on his spiritual objective very often preferring anonymity.'

What is to be remembered is that the Taṅtra Shâstr is (along with Kāvya, Nāṭya, Vedānt and Vyākaran) one of the Dharm Shastrs (scriptures) of the Hindus. At least in Kashmîr it is mainstream, and is not a fringe practice as in much of the rest of India. Most scholars agree that it is based on the Vēds. However, a small minority of scholars says that Tâṅtrik practices are older than the Vēds. At least in Kashmîr they are older than mainstream Shaivism, Buddhism and Vaishnavism.

Taṅtra also aims to solve the mysteries and hidden secrets of religion.

What does Kashmîrî taṅtra consist of? The various texts of Kashmîrî taṅtra (mentioned in italics) deal with a whole range of issues, which are:

i) Methods of prayer and worship: Distinctive prayers for various gods and goddesses (*Dēvī Rahasya*), how to pray to Tripur Sundari (*Vāmakēshwarī Mātā Vivarn*), incantations to appease the nine planets (*Dēvī Rahasya*), directions for ceremonial prayers (*Gaṇḍharv-Taṅtra*) and prayers for Nīl Saraswati, the goddess of learning (*Brihat Nīl Taṅtra*).

ii) Philosophy: The trika system of Shaivism (*Mālini Vijay Taṅtra* and *Mālini Vijay Vartikam*), the principles of Shaivism (*Mrigēndr Taṅtra*), general philosophical issues (*Vāmakēshwarī Mātā Vivarn*), how Shaktī is Tripur-Sundari (*Vāmakēshwarī Mātā Vivarn*) and various Shaivite ceremonials (*Vāmakēshwarī Mātā Vivarn*).



iii) Acquiring literary prowess: The *Brihat Nil Tañtr* teaches how to become a good poet.

iv) Methods of meditation: Various types of meditation (*Gaṇḍharv-Tañtr*), how to purify oneself before prayers, holy chants, and yogic and Shaivite postures (*Gaṇḍharv-Tañtr*), the principles of spiritual yog(a) (*Vigyân Bhairav Tañtr*) and types of meditation (*Vigyân Bhairav Tañtr*).

v) Arcane philosophical issues: The two-volume *Nétr Tañtr* dwells on the destructive power of Lord Shiv's eye, when he is enraged.

vi) Health and medicine: Special yogic practices for the prevention and cure of all kinds of illnesses (*Gaṇḍharv-Tañtr*) and various types of chemical and herbal medicines (*Uddamaréshwar Tañtr*).

vii) The occult: And, yes, despite what Justice Katju says, Kashmîrî tañtr deals with those other things, too: The worship of cremation-grounds (*Dévi Rahasya*), matters related to the distillation and consumption of alcohol (again *Dévi Rahasya*), meditation in truly desolate places like deserts, cremation-grounds, forests and remote mountains (*Brihat Nil Tañtr*) and how to perform magic (*Uddamaréshwar Tañtr*).

### Important religious beliefs of Kashmîrî Pandits

*The guardian goddesses of the Kashmîrî Pandits:* Almost every Hiṇḍû clan (*kul*) worships one particular god (*dévatâ*) or goddess (*dévi*). This is their *kul dévatâ* (lit.: clan deity; in effect, their guardian deity). The Kashmîrî Pandits' main *Kul Dévis* are Ragnya, Shârikâ, Jwâlâ, and Bâlâ Tripur Sundarî.

*Mother goddesses (mâtrikâs):* Shumbh was a demon who was stunned by the beauty of Pârvatî, the mother goddess. He asked Pârvatî jî to marry him. She told the demon that she would only marry someone who could defeat her in battle and thus prove that he was a better warrior than she. A bloody series of battles began, in which Shumbh lost all his best warriors. So, Shumbh decided to go to the battlefield in person, at the head of a very powerful army.

The battle seemed quite unequal. On the one hand was a huge army, and on the other two mother goddesses: Pârvatî jî<sup>2</sup> and Kâlî Mâtâ. Actually, Kâlî Mâtâ is a deity who had emerged from Pârvatî jî's body in order to help her. Therefore, what Shumbh's army was up against was two forms of the

2 'Can [this manifestation of the mother goddess] be our Shârikâ Bhawani?' Justice Katju speculates.

The stories are almost identical, even in their details. Therefore, the two must be the same. This manifestation of the goddess was certainly of Durgâ Mâtâ. Therefore, Durgâ Mâtâ and Shârikâ Bhawani, too, seem to be the same deity.



same goddess, and not two different goddesses. The gods found this very unfair. So, the Shaktis (divine energies) of the Lords Brahmâ, Vishnû, Shiv, Kârtikeya, Indr, Varâh and Narsingh left the bodies of these gods and went to the battlefield to help Pârvatî jî. These Shaktis all became mother goddesses and were called Brâhmani, Vaishnavi, Maheshwari, Kaumâri, Indrânî, Varâhî and Narsingh respectively.

The Kashmîrî Pandits worship them as Matrikas in the Yañtr prayer of Shârikâ Bhagwati and in the Âvaran prayer of the Yañtrs of the goddesses Ragnya, Jwâlâ and Bâlâ.

*Mahâ Vidyâs:* These are ten goddesses: Kâli, Baglâ, Chinnamasta, Bhuvaneshwari, Mâtângî, Kamalâ Dhumavati, Tripur Sundari, Târâ and Bhairavi. The Tañtriks worship them and their qualities. While Tañtriks have several kinds of rituals, all of them worship Shaktî (lit.: power, as embodied by a mother goddess or Dêvî).

*The Bhairavs:* Now, the goddesses of Shaktî can not be worshipped in isolation. There is a Pârvatî jî for each Mahâ Vidyâ. The two have to be worshipped together. For the same reason, there is a Bhairav for each Kul-Dêvî of the Kashmîrî Pandits.

The Kul Dêvî	Her Bhairav
Ragnya	Bhuteshwar
Shârikâ	Vâmdev
Jwâlâ	Mahâdev
Bâlâ Tripur Sundarî	Karneshwar

*'Self-created' icons:* Throughout the Himâlayas (including Nepal)-and also some other parts of India-there are temples with swayambhû ('self-created,' pron. soyambhu by the Kashmîrî Pandits) icons. These are not idols made by any human but sacred rocks (shilâs) that emerged from the earth on their own-or which some god or goddess had converted himself (or herself) into. This is true of the shrines of Shârikâ jî and Jwâlâ jî as well. Their icons, too, are sacred rocks.

*Vegetarianism:* Hiñdûs who eat meat are almost always apologetic (and subconsciously guilty) about the fact. This is especially true of Brâhmins. Not so in Kashmîr. The Kashmîrî Pandits have for centuries eaten meat, fish and eggs. Other meat-eating Hiñdûs stay away from meat and eggs at least on religious occasions. On the contrary, the Kashmîrî Pandits eat meat and fish during the 'Heyrat Puja' (prayer) of the 'Khechir Mawas.'

Almost all meat-eating Hiñdûs in North India abstain from meat and eggs during the Navarâtrîs. Those Kashmîrî Pandits whose guardian goddesses are Shârikâ jî and Jwâlâ jî eat meat during the Navarâtrîs as well. Shrâdh (prayers for the dead on their death anniversaries) are solemn, meatless



occasions in almost all parts of India. In Kashmir meat is part of Shradh food as well.

Almost 95% of the population of the Valley of Kashmir was Muslim in 1989, i.e. just before the Kashmiri Pandits' mass-migration. Mainstream Islâm does not frown on eating meat. Therefore, it is assumed that the tiny Kashmiri Pandit minority took to the Muslims' ways. Perhaps. However, we must remember that the Hiñdûs of several other Himâlayan regions (notably Nepal, Assam, Jourhian Mâtâ [near Jammû] and, till the early 20th century, Jammû proper), too, sacrifice (and then eat) animals on religious occasions, especially Dussehrâ.

However, many Pandits, especially women, are turning vegetarian, at least on auspicious days, after the example of Hindus from other parts of India. This trend began as a trickle in the mid-20th century, but gained momentum only in the 1990s.

*The Kashmiri Pandits' general 'laxness' in religious matters-and their fraternal relations with the Muslims:* Several observers-Indian as well as British Raj-have commented on the general 'laxness' of the Kashmiri Pandits in matters of religion. 'Intelligent Hiñdûs have often told me,' Walter Lawrence wrote, 'that a great laxness has crept into the Hiñdû religion [in Kashmir] within the last ten years... People grumble at having to climb up the Takht-i-Suliman [the Shankarâchârya Hill] on the day of Sheorâtrî... There are some curious facts about the Kashmir Brahmins which deserve mention. They are said to be extremely strict about following the rules of Brahmanism when they visit India, but in their own country they do things which would horrify the orthodox Hiñdûs. They will drink water brought by a Musalmân; they will eat food cooked on a Musalmân boat; the foster-mother of Hiñdû children is usually a Musalmânî, while the foster-brother often obtains great power in a Hiñdû household. Mahârâjâ Gulab Singh did his utmost to stop the practice of drinking water brought by a Musalmân, and severely interdicted the eating of cheese. But it was all to no effect... the Hiñdûs failed to comply with [the Mahârâjâ's] edicts... [The Hiñdûs] are flesh-eaters. An interesting fact about the Hiñdûs of Kashmir is that they worship the likeness of Her Majesty the Queen Empress [Victoria]. This prevails not only among the Pandits of the city, but also among the village Hiñdûs. It appears to be their custom to regard as divine the sovereign de facto, but in the case of the emperor Aurangzeb they made an exception, and his likeness was never worshipped...'

### **(Mahâ-) Shivarâtrî**

This is the most important festival of the Kashmiri Pandits-and has been so all through recorded history.<sup>iv</sup>



*Antiquity:* The *Nīlmat Purān* (6th or 7th century A.D., if not earlier) and The *Rājātaraṅginī* (A.D. 1148) both mention Shivarātri as the quintessential festival of Kashmīrī Hīndūs.

*The festival:* There are twelve Shivarātris in a year. The Mahāshivarātri is the biggest of these. (Mahāshivarātri is loosely called just Shivarātri)

Shivarātri means 'the night of Shiv.' On this day Lord Shiv had come down to our world in order to redeem his devotees. Hīndūs celebrate the occasion by fasting and praying all night long, at home and in temples. The festival signifies the merger of the *jīva* (a person's soul) with the *paramātmā* (lit. 'the supreme soul,' meaning God Himself).

For the Kashmīrī Pandits this is also the anniversary of Lord Shiv's wedding with Umā (Pārvati). The Pandits eat meat and fish to celebrate the festival, and offer meat as part of the sacred rituals. This, as we have seen, is unusual for a Hīndū community. The Kashmīrī Pandits' justification is that the Bhairavs whom Lord Shiv had brought along in his wedding procession were no vegetarians. The Kashmīrī Pandits don't want to be seen as being lacking in hospitality, so they serve meat and fish to us modern-day Bhairavs.

*Seasonal significance:* The festival marks the end of winter and lasts several days. Different sects within the community celebrate it on different days. Married women give presents to their mothers-in-law, especially on the first 'Heyrath' after marriage (explained on next page). They also visit their parents, who give them gifts.

*Spiritual significance:* On this day the planets line up in a particular arrangement. The Hīndūs believe that this injects an unusual amount of energy into the human body. This increases the efficacy of prayer and meditation.

Shiv is the source of everlasting happiness. On this night the devotee seeks to merge his identify with Lord Shiv. This helps him realise eternal Truth, Happiness and Beauty (satyam, shivam and sundaram).

Shiv, as Vasudev<sup>v</sup> points out, means 'that which is not.' All us-and everything else-came out of nothing, and will all go back to being nothing. Which means that we came out of Shiv and shall go back to Him. The Muslims, like the Sikhs, venerate God as the great teacher (Rashīd, Ustād or Gurū). The Hīndūs, too, see Shiv as the first and foremost teacher and guide.

*When celebrated:* Mahāshivarātri is the night between the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the Indian lunar month of Phāgun (Phālgun). The main festival is normally in late-February or the first week of March. However, for the Kashmīrī Pandits the festivities start several days before. Indeed, they run through almost the entire Krishn Paksh ('dark fortnight') of Phāgun: and beyond. ('Dark' refers to the 'darkness' of the night because the moon



is on the wane. The Kashmiri word for the Krishn Paksh is 'gatt pachh.') In all, the festivities and merriment last 21 days. They end on the 8th day of the 'bright fortnight' (Shukl Paksh) of Phâgun.

Hindûs elsewhere observe Mahâshivarâtrî on the 14th day of Phâgun. The Kashmiri Pandits do so a day before, on the 13th. 'Chaturdash' is Hindî for 'fourteen.' So Mahâshivarâtrî elsewhere is also called 'Shiv Chaturdashi.' Now one can't commemorate a Chaturdashi on the 13th of a month. So, to compensate, the Kashmiri Pandits celebrate Shiv Chaturdashi, too, but a month before: in the Krishn Paksh of Mâgh (Jan-Feb). On that occasion, they fast for three days, don't cook (or eat) meat and worship Lord Shiv.

*Heyrath and local adaptations:* The Kashmiri Pandits call this festival 'Heyrath.' This name has allegedly been derived the Persian word 'hairat' ('surprise' or 'astonishment'). The festival is said to have got this name during the Afghân era in the valley. (In that case the first heydrath must have been celebrated in 1820, a few months after Afghân rule came to an end and Sikh rule began.)

*The Legend:* All Kashmiris believe that snow falls in plenty on this auspicious occasion<sup>3</sup>, which marks the end of the worst part of winter. Therefore, on Shivarâtrî the Kashmiri Pandits sing *Sona shîn volun dâri dâre/ Mahârâza râza kumâr hai âv* ('Hark! Snowflakes made of gold are wafting down/ Prince Shiv, the bridegroom, has come [to marry goddess Pârvatî]').

In the nineteenth century an Afghân administrator called Jabbâr is said to have persuaded the Kashmiri Pandits to celebrate the festival in Âshâd (June-July), which is the hottest month of the year, and when there's no question of snowflakes in the inhabited areas. The Kashmiri Pandits obeyed, and shifted Shivarâtrî to July that year. Then, miraculously, as if on cue, there was snowfall on the great day. This was a matter of 'hairat' for everyone. That is how Shivarâtrî got its Persian name.

(The miracle might well have occurred. Snow is known to have fallen in the higher mountains-above 12,000'-in all months of the year. However, the only Afghân governor by that name was one Jabbâr Khân, who ruled Kashmir for a few months in 1819: too short a tenure to have allowed him time to make such a big change. The Kashmiri Pandits' legend, however,

3 Whether this is a miracle or a natural phenomenon, which has to do with the time of the year, can be debated. That it snows on Shivarâtrî can not be. From November 2002 to almost the end of February 2003, Kashmir went through its worst drought in recent memory. All of us in Kashmir were petrified about how we would manage for drinking water in the summer. Then, on the 21st February, 2003, i.e. on Shivarâtrî day, we received so much snow and rain that many parts of Srinagar and Budgâm got flooded. Those snowflakes were more welcome- and useful- than flakes of gold.



implies that it was this interference with tradition that resulted in a huge famine. In any case, Afghân rule in Kashmîr came to an end with Jabbâr's brief stint.)

*The sequence of the rituals:*

**The first six days of the Krishn Paksh of Phâgun** (from 'hur ukdoh' or the 1st Phâgun to 'hur shiyam' or the 6th Phâgun): i) As in all lands that receive snow, houses in Kashmîr need cleaning after the long winter. So the first thing to be done is to clean up the house thoroughly; and decorate it for the festival. Hur is a Kashmîrî word than means both 'singing' and 'whitewashing.' The rituals of the first nine days all have the word 'hur' prefixed to their names. ii) The next thing is to buy the things required for the rituals connected with this fortnight. These things include walnuts, utensils and Vâtuk sâmagri ('prayer materials to worship Vâtuk with') for the main prayer on Shivarâtrî day. Till the 1940s, the walls of Kashmîrî houses used to be smeared with a paste of clay and cow-dung. That is how houses in much of rural South Asia are still 'white-washed.'

**The 7th, 8th and 9th days of Phâgun** ('hur sattam,' 'hur atham' and 'hur navam,' respectively): People attend night-long, congregational prayers, preferably in the temples of Ganpatyâr, Shârikâ Dêvî, Pokhribal (all three being in Srînagar) and Khîr Bhawânî.

**The Eighth Day** ('Hur Ashtamî' or 'hur atham'): On this day most Kashmîrî Pandits would (and, if in Kashmîr, still do) visit the shrine of Shârikâ Dêvî and the temple at Pokhribal (both in Srînagar). This is the birth anniversary of goddess Shârikâ. Those who live outside Srînagar try to make the trip to Shârikâ Dêvî's shrine. If they can't, they go to the most important temple in the neighbourhood.

**The night of the Eighth Day:** Some devotees stay up all night at Shârikâ Dêvî's shrine where bands of skilled singers would, till 1989, sing devotional songs (bhajans) for the congregation. Devotees normally join in the singing.

*'Why the all-night prayers?'* Vasudev<sup>vi</sup> explains, 'On this day the planetary position and the energy especially in the northern hemisphere are such that it is easy to move our energies upwards. To facilitate this, one should keep the spine vertical, and hence the tradition of staying awake throughout the night on Mahâshivarâtrî.'

Keeping the spine vertical on such occasions is also said to help us receive wisdom through our third eye: the eye of the mind. Once we manage to open this eye we will be able to see Lord Shiv.

**The Ninth Day:** Married women go to their parental home and spend the night there.



**The Tenth Day:** These women return to their husbands' homes.

**The 11th, 12th and 13th days of Phâgun:** These are three consecutive auspicious days on which the Shivarâtrî prayers are performed.

**The 12th Day:** New clay pots, with flower garlands wound around their rims, are arranged in a ritual order in the prayer room.

*The clay pots:* Each pot stands for a Hiñdû deity. The two most prominent pots represent Lord Shiv and Pârvatî jî. Two other large pots symbolise Wâgur and Vâtuk Nâth. The smaller pots stand for other deities. They too are prepared for formal worship. Some pots depict the Bhairavs.

All the pots would have been baked specially for the festival. (Since the last decades of the 20th century some people have started using pots made of steel.) The pots are taken into the house, and then the prayer room (thokur kuth), with due ritual. They are put on a small, round grass-mat (âsan). The first pot taken inside is supposed to be Wâgur.

Sacred offerings of walnuts and pure water are placed in the pots, till they are filled to the brim. The walnuts thus get soaked.

The deities mentioned above: Wâgur was the priest who performed the rituals at the wedding of Lord Shiv and Pârvatî jî. He was also the go-between who took Lord Shiv's offer of marriage to Pârvatî jî.

Vâtuk has three possible meanings: i) 'An assortment of various things,' is the literal meaning. During the main prayer on the 13th day an 'assortment' of many kinds of things is used in the rituals. This could have resulted in one particular pot being called Vâtuk. ii) During his celibate days, i.e. till he got married, Lord Shiv was called Vâtuk Nâth or Vâtuk Dev. Therefore, on the eve of his wedding anniversary he is worshipped in this form. iii) Vâtuk Bhairav is Lord Shiv's gatekeeper. People worship him in order to keep him happy: because he controls access to Lord Shiv. So much so that Shivarâtrî prayers in Kashmîr are also known as 'Vâtuk Pûjâ.'

Pârvatî jî, of course, is the goddess whom Lord Shiv got married to. She is also called Umâ.

**The 13th Day/ Trayodashî:** This is the big day. It is called Trayodashî (literally 'the 13th'). Special prayers are offered on the occasion.

**The 14th Day/ Salâm:** The name of this day is taken from the Arabic/ Islâmîc word for 'peace' or 'the peaceful one.' This is a day for festivity- and almsgiving. For minstrels it used to be an opportunity to perform at Hiñdû homes and earn some money.

**The 15th Day/ The Duniâ Mâvas** ('the moonless night of the walnuts'): This is the day after the night when the moon is at its lowest and the night at its darkest. The worship of the holy vessels reaches its finale on the 15th



day, which is known as the *Dunyâ Mâvas*. The pots are then taken to a river or stream. Prayers are offered and the soaked walnuts are removed from the pots. The empty pots are then immersed in the water.

The soaked walnuts are later distributed to (and eaten by) members of the family and others present. In South India *prasâdam* or prayer offering normally consists of fresh fruit and in North and Central India of sweets. During *Shivarâtri* in Kashmîr soaked walnuts are offered. There are several theories about this. Some people see walnut kernels as symbols of the cycle of agriculture because, after all, they are seeds. This cycle gets renewed after the long winter. My theory is that they represent the seeds that the *Bekdarat* (angels) had strewn all over Kashmîr. (See 'A History of Kashmîr'.)

**The 8th Day of the Shukl Paksh of Phâgun/ Tîlâ Atham:** This is the last day of the *Heyrath* festival. The soaked walnuts and other offerings continue to be distributed among family and friends till this day. G.N. Rainâ records that 'a lighted earthen lamp would be placed on *ari* (seat made of grass) and [set afloat on] the river... [Children] would [make a bonfire of old and unusable] *kângrîs* (fire-pots) in the evening, mostly on the river-bank. Known as *jatun tuun*, in [the Kashmîrî] language, the festivity was symbolic of the end of severe winter in Kashmîr.'

## The most-revered shrines of Kashmîrî Pandits

*'If the temple of Shârikâ Dêvî [on Srinagar's Hari Parbat] is the High Court of the Kashmîrî Pandits, then Khîr Bhawânî is our Supreme Court,'*  
a 19th century Kashmîrî Pandit saying.

### K(s)hîr Bhawânî

This is the temple that the Kashmîrî Pandit community holds in the highest regard. It is dedicated to *Ragnya Dêvî*. The community mostly lives outside Kashmîr now. However, every year tens of thousands of Kashmîrî Pandits go to Kashmîr on *Jeshth Ashtami* (May-June) and during the autumn *Navarâtrîs* to pray and seek *Khîr Bhawânî's* blessings.

*The 'milk goddess':* The temple is fondly called *Khîr Bhawânî* because of the countless devotees who have, over the centuries, offered milk and 'kheer' (rice pudding) to the sacred spring. The Pandits call it the temple of *Tulmulâ*. This is the local name of Goddess *Ragnya* (or *Raginia*), who is an incarnation of *Durgâ Mâtâ*.

*Location:* The *Khîr Bhawânî* temple, *Tulmulâ*, is 23 km. north of Srinagar. It is in the *Ganderbal* tehsil. It is possible to go directly from the Srinagar airport to the shrine (approximately 25 km). The village where the shrine is located is called *Mahesharpura*.



*The temple:* The site of the temple predates this millennium. The small temple, made of white marble, is located in the middle of a spring (or 'kund' or 'sarovar'). Walls in an extended hexagon have been built around the spring. A tiny footbridge over the spring leads to the temple. This is the style that typifies the Kashmîrî Pandit shrines of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (The Zeethyâr temple near Srinagar's Grand Palace hotel is another example). The vast courtyard around the temple is paved with *dévri*, the most expensive stone in all Kashmir.

The temple that we see today is relatively recent. Mahârâjâ Pratap Singh built it in 1912. Mahârâjâ Hari Singh made some additions.

There are clear-water streams near the temple, and many chinâr trees in and around the complex. Sacred fish are found in large numbers in these streams, in which devotees bathe and then place offerings of flowers, rice, sugar and milk.

*The Legend:* Sî Ram, the Hindu god, is said to have prayed to goddess Ragnya Dêvî during his 14-year exile. He told his lieutenant, Sî Hanumân, that when the exile was over, he, Sî Hanumân, should shift the Dêvî's (goddess') seat from Lanka. According to a variant, Sî Ram wanted to do this in order to deny Râvan, the demon king, the goddess' protection. Therefore, this would have happened in the last year of exile. Justice Shiva Nath Katju<sup>vii</sup> gives a third version: 'The Dêvî was worshipped by [Râvan] in Lanka and was brought from there and installed in Tulmûla after the defeat of [Râvan] by Shri Ram Chandrajî.'

In any case, Sî Hanumân carried out the orders. He uprooted the goddess' temple from Lanka and took it to a place called Shâdîporâ. Later, the mother goddess visited one Pandit Raghunath Gadroo in a dream. She indicated that she wanted her temple to be shifted to Tulmûla.

*The idol:* Justice Katju notes, 'In the shrine in the Khîr Bhawânî, [the] Kund Dêvî [goddess of the holy pond] Ragnya Bhagwati is sitting on the left of Her Bhairava, Bhuteshwara, and Her complexion is dark. Kâlî is Krishna-Varna [dark skinned] and has dark complexion. But as mentioned in the *dhyan* [prayer, meditation] of Ragnya Bhawânî Her complexion is very fair, like fresh snow.' Swami Lakshman joo Mahârâj, the greatest Kashmîrî Hîndû saint of the 20th century, told Justice Katju that Ragnya Bhawânî was Kâlî, the dark-skinned goddess. Katju adds, 'It is generally believed that Ragnya Bhawânî is Tripur Sundari. But if She is Kâlî also then She combines in Herself the aspects of two [Mahâ Vidyâs].'

*Fairs and auspicious occasions:* Every year, on the occasion of the Jeshth Ashtami a major festival is held here. Kashmîrî Pandits, now scattered all over the country, make it a point to come here for the festival-as do tens of thousands of others. For most Kashmîrî Pandits this now is an occasion they re-establish contact with their long-lost friends and relatives.



The festival is so important that the government gives everyone in Kashmîr a day off to enable them to attend the fair. It is celebrated on the 8th day of the first lunar fortnight of the month of Jeth (May-June). This is said to be the date on which goddess Khîr Bhawânî or Ragnya Dêvî had first revealed herself.

There is a large gathering in the evening. The atmosphere is charged with devotion. Everyone prays before the image of the goddess. Devotees pray that they should merge with the Creator, who has no form, who is present everywhere and who has always been there. In their hands the devotees hold lamps filled with (butter) ghee and incense sticks (dhûp) as they chant their prayers. They light these lamps and sticks and trace circles in the air with both, in the ritual manner. Priests chant devotional hymns. The ringing of sacred bells heightens the mood.

The other auspicious day to visit the temple is on the Shukla Paksh Ashthami of any month, when special prayers (hawans) are performed. This is the eighth day of the first fortnight of every lunar month.

The Har Ashthami day, too, is an auspicious time to visit this temple. On these Ashthamis the Hindus fast, bathe in the stream near Khîr Bhawânî, and pray at the temple inside.

*The changing colours of waters of the spring:* The waters of the small reservoir that surround the temple come from a sacred spring. They change their colours from time to time. This is considered miraculous and is attributed to powers of the goddess. The colour of the water is examined on a particular auspicious day every year. It is believed that the colour indicates what the forthcoming year will bring for the people. (There is a similar tradition of examining the waters of a spring near Basohli in Jammû province.) which magically changes colour, turning into black, when warning of disaster. The water had turned black a day before the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination, and before the 1965 war with Pâkistân.

*Taboos:* Devotees do not eat meat on the days they visit the shrine. The owners of the scores of shops and stalls set up on festive occasions are mostly Muslims. However, things offensive to vegetarians (meat, eggs, onions and garlic) are not sold.

*The autumn Navarâtrî:* It is considered auspicious for Kashmîrî Pandits to visit the temple of their guardian goddess on all nine days. On the last (ninth) Navratri, an *aarti* (prayer) is held at the temple after which people break their fast. On the tenth (Dussehrâ) day, Râvan's effigy was once burnt. This practice has faded away after the mass-migration of the Pandits in 1990. Devotees also visit the Shârikâ temple during these nine days. There is no dancing or music. Devotees only offer prayers to the goddess who is said descend to the earth during this period.



*Link with Karla:* This venerable Kashmiri shrine has had a deep link with South India since ancient times. Śrī Parijnanashram Swamiji, the Adī Gurū of the Kanara Saraswats is believed to have migrated from Khīr Bhawānī to Karla more than a thousand years ago. To this day, during their annual festival, the Kanara Saraswats give the main Shiv Linga an 'abhishek' (anointment) of five litres of fresh milk. This is later used to prepare 'kheer' (pudding) for the 'prasād' (offering). This is sometimes followed by an 'abhishek' of 'teerth' (pilgrimage) which is taken all the way from 'Ksheer Bhavani' (Kashmīr) to Karla. (Note the spelling, which is the correct Saṁskṛit spelling and has not got simplified over the centuries). Kanarese devotees put in considerable effort to carry the materials for the anointment over thousands of miles. Incidentally, this reinforces the theory I had alluded to of the light-skinned, light-eyed Saraswats of India's west coast having gone there from Kashmīr. (All over India Lord Shiv has a blue skin. However, in Kashmīr his skin is white—that's right, white, and not pink or yellow. It is so in several parts of Karnataka, too.)

The Saraswats of Saurashtra, Mahārāshtra, Gujarāt, Karnataka and Keralā believe that their ancestors had come from Kashmīr. They worship Shārdā Dēvī. This goddess is the daughter of Lord Brahmā himself and is also known as Saraswati, the goddess of learning and the arts. The main temple of Shārdā Dēvī is on the banks of the Kishan Ganga in what is now called 'Āzād' Jammū and Kashmīr.

*Khīr Bhawānī Asthapan:* This sister shrine is in a village called Tikker. It is on the Chowkibal Road, roughly 1 km from Kupwārā town. The annual festival is celebrated in the month of April-May.

*Khīr Bhawānī in exile:* Now that the Kashmīrī Pandits mostly live outside Kashmīr, a Kheer Bhawani temple is being set up in Jammū.

### The Shārikā Dēvī Shrine

(This is also known as the shrine of Chakreshwari, Shārikā Parbat, Shārikā Bhagwati, the Pradyuman Peeth, the Shakti-Peeth, the Shārikā-Peeth, Shri Chakram, the Siddapeeth, Tripur Sundari, Mahā Tripursundari and Rajrajeshwari. The shrine is located on the western slope of the Hari Parbat. It is behind and well away from Makhdoom Sāheb and Chhattī Pādshāhī.)

Jagadambā Shārikā Bhagwati is one of the many forms of Mahāshaktī, the mother goddess. 'Jagadambā' means 'the mother of the world.'<sup>4</sup> 'It is the title of Goddess Durgā in all her manifestations, of which Shārikā is one. 'Bhagwati' means 'goddess' and Shārikā is her personal name. 'Mahāshaktī' means 'the great energy' or 'the great power.' This divine energy assumes a human form in the shape of Goddess Durgā and her various incarnations.

4 That is the literal meaning. It actually means 'the mother of all creation.'



In Kashmîr, Shârikâ jî is also known as Hari (which, as explained above, means 'the bird' or 'the mynah.' The Kashmîrî Pandits believe that her home in Kashmîr is in Srinagar's Hari Parbat. For them she is the 'guardian-goddess' of Srinagar City. She is also their Isht-Dêvî (favourite goddess).

Goddess Shârikâ has eighteen arms (asht-dash-b[h]ujâ; the Kashmîrî Pandits drop the [h] sound). She thus combines in herself all nine incarnations of Lord Vishnû.

There are two possible meanings of the "Hari" in Hari Parbat. That it means Vishnû, the Hindu God, would have been a fair explanation if the word had been pronounced the central Indian way ("hurry"). However, in Kashmîr the word is pronounced "herr", which is the Kashmîrî word for the Indian mynah (a bird).

It is certain that the hill was once called Shârikâ Parbat. Shârikâ is the Sanskrit equivalent of "herr". Inside the shrine is a large stone (a shila). It represents Para Dêvî, the goddess of the shrine. Some writers feel that this could be the very stone that goddess Shârikâ had dropped into the lake. That is not possible because that the entire hill is supposed to be an enlarged version of that divine stone. (See also 'A History of Kashmîr' for more about the goddess Shârikâ.)

This is the second most revered shrine of the Kashmîrî Pandits in all Kashmîr and the most important one in Srinagar. It is arguably as old as human settlement in Kashmîr. The Kashmîrî Pandits believe that by praying often enough at the shrine one can get whatever one has been praying for. Devotees go there for the more intense forms of Hindu prayer.

A Government of India document points out, 'There is no regular temple<sup>5</sup> at this place but the site where the goddess is believed to have revealed herself is pigmented and held in high esteem.

'For the convenience of pilgrims, steps made of chiselled stones have been built right from the foot of the hill to the site of the shrine which would otherwise involve a tiresome uphill journey of several hundred feet.'

*Mystical geometric patterns:* There is no regular idol either.<sup>6</sup> Instead, there is a holy rock (shilâ) on which a mystic pattern has been etched. This is the Shrî-chakr (or Mahâ-shrî-yañtr). It consists of a dot around which circles and triangles have been drawn. These mystic geometric lines, and

<sup>5</sup> There is a smart, modern, temple-like concrete canopy there, even if it is not a 'regular' temple.

<sup>6</sup> The 'Vitasta' website suggests that there used to be a 'centuries old idol' of an eighteen-armed here, which was 'stolen by some miscreants.' Be that as it may, the rock with the mystic patterns is the original and most important depiction of the goddess.



not an idol, personify Goddess Shârikâ. That is why she is called Chakreshwari and her shrine is sometimes called Shri Chakram. ('Chakr' literally means 'the circle'.)

Opinder Ambardar<sup>viii</sup> writes, 'It is perhaps due to the Goddess Shrichakra that the capital city of Kashmir is said to have derived its name of Srinagar (Shrinagra).' (Chakr, chakra and chakram are variants of the same word.) He adds, 'The Shrichakra is a symbolic representation of the cosmic union of Lord Shiva and Shakti. The Shrichakra is the most famous 'Yantra' [instrument] and Yantra is indispensable in the Tañtra [mystic] Worship. Every Goddess is represented by an individual 'Yantra.' [A]mong all the Yantras, the most famous and venerated one is the 'Shri-yantra'. The yantra inscribed with specific mantras represents the Divine Mother, who is the cause of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the Cosmos.'

Thus, the chakr of the shrine indicates that it is a tâñtric (occult) shrine. T.N. Moza<sup>ix</sup> says, 'A hymn from the famous "Rudra Yamala Tañtra" sums up the nature of Shri Chakram [which is] engraved on marble plates. When translated [it] reads, "The point, the triangle, the group of eight triangles, two groups of 10 triangles, the group of 14 triangles, the eight-petalled lotus, the 16-petalled lotus, three circles and the quadrangular ramparts all [a]round constitute in [sic] Shri Chakram of the Supreme Dêvi. It is through Sâdhnâ and Bhakti that one reaches the state of Samadhi. The awakening of the Kundalini Shakti depends on the fervent pursuit of Sâdhnâ. Through Bhakti one's Kundalini Shakti is awakened. Abhinav Gupta has given first place to Bhakti for God realization."

*Best time of the day:* Devout Kashmîrî Pandits would go to the temple early in the morning, shortly after daybreak.

*Prayers offered, especially at daybreak:* The Kashmîrî Pandits would recite Sañskrit verses in praise of Durgâ Mâtâ, the same as in the rest of India. These include the Shârikâ Mahâtmya and Shakt Shâstr verses, which are found in pan-Indian texts but are referred specifically to this shrine.

*Auspicious days of the year/ festivals:* The most important days for community-prayers (and festivity) at the shrine are:

*Horâ Ashtami or Hur Âthum:* This is the Ashtami (the eighth day) of the Krishn Paksh ('dark fortnight') of the month of Phâgun [Feb-March].

Then there are three consecutive auspicious days during the Shukl Paksh ('bright fortnight') of the month of Âshâd [June-July]: Har Satum (Saptami/ the seventh day), Har Âthum (Ashtami) and Har Navum (Navmî/ the ninth day).

*Hâr Navum (Âshâd Navmî)* is the birth anniversary of goddess Shârikâ. It was also on this day, a few thousand years ago, that the bird-goddess had dropped a divine stone on the demons that lived in the lake. The



offering made on this occasion is called the 'taher-charvan'. This is a combination of boiled rice and the liver of lambs.

Traditionally, a Mahâchañdî Yagya (lit.: 'the grand ritual prayer for the great Mother Goddess') would be performed on the three days leading to the all-important Har Navum. The prayer would begin on the Har Satum. Its grand finale would be on the Har Navum, when a lamb called the Rajê-Kath would be ritually sacrificed. In more recent times (the second half of the 20th century), the all-night singing of devotional songs about Shârikâ jî has marked Har-Navum at the shrine.

The other auspicious days are a) *Navreh* (the New Year Day of the Kashmîrî Pandits), which occurs during the month of Mâgh (Mar-Apr); and b) the nine *Navrâtrâ* days (Nav-Durgâh),.

*The 'parikramâ' (circumambulation) route:* It is considered particularly devout to go around the temple (indeed, around the entire hill) during the month of Magh. This circumambulation (locally called 'prâkrum') would begin at the Ganishon (Ganesh) temple and end at the Kâthî Darwâzâ. The devotee can choose either of two routes: along the wall that encloses the old city or along the bottom of the hill. Between the Ganishon and the Darwâzâ are some important places at which either prayers are offered or the devotee at least bows respectfully. These are, in the order in which they occur:

i) the Satrêsh<sup>7</sup> (the seven sons of Lord Brahmâ, known to the rest of India as the Saptrishis); ii) the temple of Goddess Kâli; iii) the Siddh-Peeth (a 1.25acre ground, which has what New Agers call powerful vortices); iv) the Dévi Ângan<sup>8</sup> (lit.: 'the backyard of Shârikâ jî'): it is near this place that the two routes mentioned below meet; v) the thâpnâ (establishment) of the bird-goddess, Harî: even here, the goddess is signified by a rock; vi) the thâpnâ of Mahâ Lakshmî jî, the goddess of wealth; this is somewhat above the thapna of Hari; vii) the Kauls' temple, which is in front of the thâpnâ of Mahâ Lakshmî jî; this is Kashmîr's oldest Krishna temple; viii) the thâpnâ of the Lord Vâmdev, who is the Bhairav of Ragnya Dévi; ix) Ragnya Dévi's shrine at Pokhribal: it also houses a natural spring, the waters of which are considered holy;<sup>9</sup> x) Hanumân jî's temple.

7 'It is at this spot that the devotees used to ascertain their luck by [the] random picking-up of some rice grains scattered on the boulder ([an] even number [of grains meant that] bad [luck was on its way] and [an] odd number [prophesied] good luck,' says Ambardar.

8 Ambardar informs us, 'The holy shrine of Shrichakra with [an] adjacent open space [which, too, is] known [as the] Devi-angan is also [to be found] in Tamil Nadu [South India].'

9 Ambardar writes, 'A 'sampur yagnya' used to be performed [at this shrine] in honour of the Goddess Ragnya especially on Shuklapaksh Ashtamis and other auspicious days.'



Opinder Ambardar notes, 'Pîr Pandit Pâdshâh Resh Peer, one of the greatest saints of Kashmîr of [the] 17th Century, is said to have performed [this three-mile] circumambulation of [the] Hari-Parbat...on his knees for forty days in the wee hours of the morning.'

*The physical appearance of Shârikâ Bhawânî:* In some depictions of Shârikâ Bhawânî in paintings and literature, she has eighteen arms. In others she is seated on a lion and her clothes are all red. Vâmdev, who is her Bhairav, is normally shown next to her. Some ancient texts call her the 'parrot-coloured goddess.'

*Shârikâ ji's temple in exile:* Now that the Kashmîrî Pandits mostly live outside Kashmîr, a Shârikâ temple is being set up in Faridabad (a suburb of Delhi).

### **Zeethyâr**

The temple of Jeshtâ/ Zeshthâ Devi is situated behind the Grand Palace Hotel, between it and the Raj Bhawan. The Kashmîrî Pandits have an interesting love-ignore relationship with it. On the one hand they regard it as one of their most important temples. They visit it at least once a year. On the other hand, many (if not all) Kashmîrî Pandits feel that visits to this serene temple bring bad luck. Therefore, many of them tend to avoid the temple. (Hîndûs everywhere have a similar love-ignore attitude towards the epic *The Mahâbhârata*.)

Jalap, the son of the great central Indian Emperor Ashok, is said to have built the temple. He must have built an earlier structure at this spot, because the architecture of the present temple is quite undistinguished and looks very early-20<sup>th</sup> century (at best, late-19<sup>th</sup> century). The surroundings are at once grand and bare. The temple is some way up the vast Zaberwan mountain. But it is on the bare, treeless side of the mountain.

The temple is small, and set in the middle of a water tank, on the same lines as Khîr Bhawânî. The family of its priests did not migrate to Jammû in the 1990s, partly because the temple is near the 'high-security' zone. But because the devotees mostly migrated, the priests have been reconsidering their decision.

Incidentally, the hill that the Shankarâchârya temple is built on was, in ancient times, called the Jesth (or Zesth) Lidder. I suspect that it was dedicated to the same goddess as the Zeethyâr temple.

### **(Mahâ-) Shivarâtrî: other theories (and details)**

Prof. Neerja Mattoo argues that the word *Hérat* (*hayrath*) actually means 'hérr + râ't' or 'the night of the Lord [Shiv].' It is too ancient a concept. It can't be linked to the actions of some 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Governor.



The First Day of the dark fortnight of Shivarâtrî (i.e. of the month of Phâgun) is called *Hur ukdoh*.

The Tenth Day is called *Dyâr* (money) *dâhan*. It is a day of gambling for stakes, much like Diwali elsewhere in India. Today the Kashmîrî Pandits do it with playing cards. Before the advent of cards they played with cowries.

The Eleventh Day is called *Gâdkâ* (fish). On this day enough fish is purchased to last a fortnight.

The Twelfth Day is the *Wâgur Bahâ*.

The Thirteenth Day is known as *Hêrat Truvâh*.

On the Eighth Day of the Shukl Paksh (the bright fortnight), lamps are also lit in various parts of the house: at the main gate, in the kitchen, by the well and in the prayer room.

Regarding why soaked walnuts are given to friends on the *Dunyâ Mâvas*, Mrs. Neerja Mattoo's theory is that at that time of the year fresh fruits are not available.

### References

- i Excerpted from The American Heritage(r) Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition (c) 1996 by Houghton Mifflin Company.
- ii Adapted from the website Kashmîr Saivism/ Hinduism Today, Issue 94-03, hosted by the Kashmîrî Overseas Association.
- iii *Life Positive* magazine, New Delhi, September 2001. Pages 58-64.
- iv The *Shivarâtrî* section is based, apart from primary sources and discussions with knowledgeable Kashmîrî Pandits, on: 'Shivarâtrî: Night of Bliss' by Prof. ON Chungroo, *Daily Excelsior*, Jammû, the 2nd March, 2003; 'Open the third eye on Mahâshivarâtrî' by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, *The Times of India*, the 1st March 2003, MA Pandit's *Festivals of Kashmir*, and several websites, notably 'Shivaratri -The Biggest Festival Of Kashmîrî Pandits' by G.N. Rainâ
- v Vasudev, op cit.
- vi Vasudev, op cit.
- vii From the website, 'Kashmîr Tantrism' by Justice Shiva Nath Katju
- viii 'Vitasta' magazine, Vol. XXXV (2001-2002): I gathered the material from the Vitasta website.
- ix 'Shrines of Hamza Makhdum Sahib and Chakreshwari,' by T.N. Moza, *Kashmir Times*, Jammû, 28 September, 1998. Moza's quotation marks are not clear and I have had to guess.



## Shiva Shrines of Kashmîr

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The following places are connected with Lord Shiva. For details see the chapters on the respective districts.

### Ânañtnâg

- Martand (might have been a Shiva temple).
- Umuoh: Around three kilometres from Verinag.
- Verinag
- The Waheed Baba Wudar, to the west of Bijbehara.
- See also the chapter on the 'Sri Amarnathji Yâtrâ' for several more shrines connected with Lord Shiva.

### Bârâmmullâ

- Gulmarg was once called Gaurimarg (the meadow of Gauri, wife of Lord Shiva).
- Pattan: Two Shiva temples.

### Budgâm

No major Shiva shrine.

### Kupwârâ

No major Shiva shrine.



## Pulwâmâ

- Awantipora was possibly a Shiva shrine.
- Jawbrari
- Payer/ Pa Yech
- Kounsar Nag

## Srînagar city

There are several Shiva temples in the town. The Shankaracharya temple is the most prominent.

## Srînagar district

- Gangabal
- Meru Vardhan
- Nund Kol



## The Sikh Gurûs and Kashmîr

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### Sikhism in Kashmir

Kashmir's contacts with Sikhism date to Gurû Nanak Dev ji (b. 1469) himself. This venerable founder of Sikhism visited Srinagar with two followers, Hassu, a smith, and Sihân, a calico printer.

### Gurû Nânak Dev ji in Mattan

Gurû Nânak Dev ji went on his third missionary tour (udasi) in 1516. This took him to Srinagar, Mattan and Anāitnâg. At Mattan, the great Gurû came upon Pandit Brahm Dâs. The Pandit was one of the most distinguished Saṅskrit scholars of the time. However, his learning and his eminence had made him somewhat vain.

When Gurûji saw the Pandit come with a 'huge stock of books', he recited the following couplet, "One may read thousands of books, with a cart load of books to follow. One may study countless epics or fill one's cellars with volumes of learning. One may read for generations on end and spend every month of the year studying. And one may read all one's life till one's last breath. But, says Nânak, there is only one truth and that truth is His [God's] name. Everything else is the conceit of an egoistic mind<sup>1</sup>."

Pandit Brahm Dâs realised that he had erred. He touched the feet of the Gurû. He became the first Kashmiri to convert to Sikhism. A gurûdwârâ was built at Mattan, at the entrance of the eponymous Hîndû pilgrimage in honour of Gurû Nânak. (The volume on 'Leh and Kargil' has some details of the noble Gurû's visit to that region, especially to Patther Sahib. During that leg of his mission he visited Mansarovar, Tibet, China and Ladâkh as well.)

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Ajit Singh's website has a slightly different translation of this verse.



### Kashmîr's first Sikh Mission

The first Sikh mission (*manjî*) in Kashmîr was set up in Srinagar during the era of Gurû Amar Das, the third Gurû.

Subsequently, some Kashmîrî converts to Sikhism came under pressure to recite their ancestral Saṅskrit hymns. They complained to Gurû Arjan Dev ji (1581-1606), the fifth Gurû. He sent Madho Sodhi to Kashmîr to instruct the Sikhs, through sermons and *kirtan* (prayer), on how to conduct their religious affairs. Sodhi was an expert in the religion.

Gurû Arjan Dev ji is said to have visited Shâdimarg in Kashmîr.

19<sup>th</sup> century records indicate that in religious matters the Sikhs of Kashmîr came under the jurisdiction of a Bhâi (brother) based in Poonch. And whenever this spiritual head died, the Râjâ of Poonch would appoint his successor. The Bhâi would visit Kashmîr every alternate year and would then, in the words of a British administrator, 'collect his dues from the Sikhs.'

### Gurû Hargobind jî's tour of Kashmîr

Gurû Hargobind ji, the sixth Gurû (*chhatta pādshah*), was the next to visit the Valley, around 1620 (or even as late as in 1644). He seems to have come by the Mughal route, i.e. Gujrât-Bhimbar and the Pîr Pañjâl Pass. He went back to the Punjâb through Bârâmullâ, Urî, Kathai, Dopatta, Khanda, and Muzaffarâbâd. The last four places are now in POK. Fine gurûdwârâs<sup>2</sup> have been built at most of these places in his honour. These include the Gurûdwârâ Thana Sahib in Bârâmullâ, the Gurûdwârâ Parampila in Urî and the Gurûdwârâ Nagâli Sâheb in Poonch. During that tour the Gurû also visited Wazirabad, Mirpur and Bhimbar Rehran.

According to some respected historians (British Raj, Hiñdû and Sikh alike), Gurû Hargobind jî came to Kashmîr with Emperor Jehângîr. He set up camp at Shalimar, which was close to the emperor's camp in the Nishat garden. Some Sikh historians say that Empress Noor Jehan called on Gurû Hargobind ji at Shalimar to pay her respects.

Historian Ajit Singh<sup>1</sup> posts a caveat. He points out that Jehângîr, whose tour journals have been maintained meticulously, did not enter Kashmîr through the Bhimbar-Pîr Pañjâl Pass route either in 1620 or even in 1622. Nor did he leave Kashmîr by the same route as the Gurû. Besides, Singh says that the Nishat garden had not been built till almost fifty years later. (One can't be too sure about this. An unrelated account suggests that by 1633 the Nishat had been in existence for some years. In any case, it was not a royal garden in 1633. So Ajit Singh is right to the extent that Jehângîr would not have camped at the Nishat.)

<sup>2</sup> Sikh houses of worship.



Even the Gurû is unlikely to have camped at Shalimar. What we know for sure is that he visited- and probably camped at- the site of the present Chhatti Pâdshâhî gurûdwârâ. Equally certainly, Jehângîr was lodged in the palace at Koh-é-mârâñ (Hari Parbat), which is only a few hundred metres uphill. Almost every time that she came down to the town, Noor Jehan would have gone past the Gurû's camp. Given the Gurû's enormous standing in the world of religion, it stands to reason that the empress would have called on him.

The Gurû camped in Srînagar for almost three months. Ajit Singh writes, '[The Gurû] held congregations [and] delivered discourses [in Kashmir]. At Srînagar, Gurû Hargobind expounded the thesis that the Gurû's treasure chest is for the benevolence of the poor.'

Gurû Hargobind jî also met Kattu Shah, who had converted from Islâm to Sikhism, and had taken to evangelisation. Ajit Singh adds, '[A] large number of Kashmîris, both Hindus and Muslims, embraced Sikhism due to the devoted and committed preaching by Gurû jî. He appointed Bhai Garhia jî to preach the Sikh religion.'

He initiated the 'Chhatti Padshahi' Gurûdwaras of Srînagar and Bârâmulâ. He also reconverted to Sikhism such Hindus who had converted to Islâm in between.

Historian G.M.D. Sufi says that the Gurû, a refugee towards the end of his life, died in the Kashmîr hills in 1645. However, all the other sources that I have consulted say that Gurû Hargobind jî died on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1644, at Kiratpur ('a city in the foothill of the Himâlayas').

### The Story of Srînagar's Gurûdwârâ Chhatti Pâdshâhî

A Kashmîrî Brâhmin called Sewa Das had converted to Sikhism. He took upon himself the duty of performing *sewa* (serving the faith and serving other people). He would organise religious functions and set up free kitchens (*langars*) during congregations.

His mother Bhâg Bhari was touched by her son's dedication and devotion. She, too, began to chant the name of the Gurû. She wanted to meet the sixth Gurû. However, she was too old and feeble to go over to the Punjâb to do so. Besides, she could barely see.

The only way out was for the Gurû to come to Kashmîr to meet her. Her son told her that the Gurû was *antarjâmî*: he could read everyone's thoughts and he knew what was going on throughout the world. So, if her devotion was steadfast and her intentions pure, the Gurû would get to know. And if she were to pray hard enough, he would come over to meet her.



Bhâg Bharî began to knit a garment for the Gurû. She would chant his name throughout the day.

Gurû Hargobind ji, the sixth Gurû, was in Amritsar at the time. He got the feeling that someone in Kashmîr was thinking of him and trying to contact him. He knew that he had to go to Kashmîr. So he left Amritsar for Lahore, which was on the route to Kashmîr.

Srinagar was a walled city during the Gurû's time. Bhâg Bharî lived just outside the wall, near the Kâthî Darwâzâ. When the Gurû reached Srinagar he went straight to her house. 'Give me the garment that you have been knitting for me,' he told her. 'I don't want to wear any other clothes now.'

This indicated to the almost-blind Bhâg Bharî that it was the Gurû himself who was talking to her. She fell at his feet. She compared his visit with those of the great deities and saints of India. She told him that Sri Râm had gone to the deep woods to meet Shabri, a poor Bhîl woman, to accept half-eaten berries from her. Then as Sri Krishn he went to the house of Bhagat Biddu to eat the banana peels that the devotee gave him. As Gurû Nanak he went to Ahmedabad to eat the humble bread that Bhai Lallo had to offer. 'Now,' she told the sixth Gurû, 'you have come to me. I am truly blessed.'

The Gurû drew water from the earth and gave it to Bhâg Bharî to wash her eyes with. She did so and suddenly she was able to see. Word of this miracle spread like wildfire. People began to say, 'Look, the Gurû has come all the way from Amritsar just to bless this old woman. Besides, he has cured her poor eyesight.'

Bhâg Bharî had a very advanced spirituality. She knew that she was going to die. So she sat in a yogic *aasan* (posture) till her soul left her body. Sewa Das requested Gurû Hargobind ji to light Bhâg Bharî's pyre. The Gurû did so. He then served food to the *sangat* (congregation) and left for Bârâmulâ and Uri. After that he left Kashmîr and went to Panjâ Sahib, Gujrat (a town in West Punjâb) and then Hafzabad.

A well has since been constructed around the spring from which the Gurû had drawn the holy water. The Chhatti Padshahi Gurûdwara of Srinagar has been built on the site where Bhâg Bharî's house used to be.

### Kashmîrî Pandits petition Gurû Tegh Bahadur jî

In 1675, some Kashmîrî Pandits from Mattan went to Ânandpur Sâhib to meet Tegh Bahadur ji, the ninth Gurû of Sikhism. They apprised him of the various problems that they were facing. Their account stirred him as well as his son, young Sahibzada Gobind Rai. The brave prince said that if need be his father and he would lay down their lives in the course of getting the Kashmîrî Pandits' problems solved. And that is what Gurû Tegh Bahadur did. He went to Delhi and, on November 11, 1675, was martyred while fighting for causes that included issues concerning the Kashmîrî Pandits.



### The migration of some Sikhs- to and from Kashm  r

The first Sikhs of Kashm  r, as we have seen, were local converts. These were mostly Kashm  r   Pandits who had converted to Sikhism; but some, like Kattu Shah, had been Muslims before their conversion. The next to convert were Punj  b   Mohy  l Br  hm  ns, who had been living for several generations in what is now B  r  mull   district. After Mah  r  j   Ranjit Singh took over the government of the Valley in 1819, some of this community- mostly of the B  l   sub-caste- took to Sikhism.

In addition to local converts, some Sikhs migrated to the state from outside. Sukh Jiwan, a Punj  b   H  nd  , was the governor of Kashm  r from 1753 to 1762, appointed by the Kabul-based Afgh  n government. He brought a number of Sikhs with him. The Sikhs of Hamal have descended from this group. The Sikhs of Tr  l (Pulw  m  ), too, believe that their ancestors migrated to Kashm  r during the Afgh  n era (1752-1819).

During the same period some Kashm  r   Sikhs and Pandits, notably from the Dachanpara area of Kashm  r, migrated in the reverse direction— from the state to Kabul.

When Mah  r  j   Ranjit Singh's forces conquered the Valley, another small group of Sikhs migrated to Kashm  r. However, despite these conversions and migrations, the number of Sikhs in the state has always been very small. The last census conducted in the state as a whole- before P  kist  n and China annexed parts of it- was in 1941. In that year 1.64% of the population of the state was Sikh. Of this the majority lived in Jamm   province

### References

- i. Ajit Singh is a retired Deputy Conservator of Forests; he has posted his history on a website called 'Guru Hargobind Sahib's Journey to Kashm  r.'



# Nature



1875



# 34

## Flora

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In the beginning Kashmîr was a gigantic lake. Several thousand years later the mountain near Bârânullâ came falling down and an opening was created in the direction of Muzaffarabâd (POK). Most of the waters of that great lake poured out of Kashmîr into what is now POK. However, a lot of water remained in the Valley. The large number of lakes that dot Kashmîr are the most obvious example of this water. Marshes and 'wetlands' rank next in the hierarchy. And then comes Kashmîr's huge reserve of underground water. The water table in not just Bârânullâ district but also in the poshest neighbourhoods of Srinagar is so high that it is almost embarrassing. (Let us skip the details. Suffice it to say that in a normal year you just have to dig for a foot or two to strike water.) As a result Kashmîr is extremely fertile. All kinds of trees, fruit and flowers grow here. This much is, a scientific fact.

After God smashed a passage through the mountain between Bârânullâ and Muzaffarabâd, and thus drained the Valley, He is supposed to have sent His angels over to Kashmîr. These 'Bekdarat' scattered about seeds of many kinds to dry the soil. The seeds later grew into the incredible variety of vegetation that we find in the Valley today.

**Almond:** It Ripens in autumn. The *Gazetteer* (1890) observes, 'The sweet almonds are considered dry and warm remedies, and are used in headaches and debilities. Oil is made of them. A branch of the tree is said to keep flies out of the room...'

**Apple:** There are several varieties, some of which start ripening as early as in June and July. Most, however, ripen in September. The crop is so plentiful that much of it falls off and rots on the ground. In the past (till the 1960s) apples (and several vegetables and fruits) were dried in the sun and stored for the winters. However, with the advent of modern storage techniques, and the availability in winters of fresh vegetables from Jammû and the rest of India, this tradition of drying (dehydrating) produce is on its way out but still not totally gone.



*Ambri*: The unique tasting ambri apple grows only on Kashmîrî soil and is a rare species heading for extinction. These apples ripen in late autumn. They also yield the largest crop per tree and are most valued for eating. The name of this sweet smelling fruit, M.Y. Taing feels, is derived from the Sanskrit-Persian scent called 'amber' which is obtained from a sea fish. The ambri tree is grown by grafting a branch of an ambri tree on the sapling of a wild apple tree. It starts bearing fruit in twelve to fifteen years. It lives for almost a hundred years. At its peak it yields almost a thousand apples, is tall and has a wide girth. It bears fruit even when old. As fuel it is valued because its flame is strong and its embers smoulder for a long while. Flowers blossom on the tree in late April.

The wood of all apple trees is hard and used for cog-wheels and gun-stocks. Apples have also been grown in Ladâkh and on the banks of the Chenab since mediæval times. The Basohli variety, too, has been grown for several centuries now and marketed in the plains.

*The apple in Kashmîrî history*: The fruit is called *tsonth* in Kashmîrî. Some theorise that apples are not indigenous to Kashmîr but were brought in from elsewhere. However, the fact that several wild species are found in the forests indicates the depth, and antiquity, of their association with Kashmîr. In any case, the *Rājātaraṅginī* tells us that when Queen Didda (A.D. 980-1003) grew old and started worrying about who would succeed her, she summoned the sons of her brother Uday Raja. She placed a heap of apples before them and said that she would select as her heir the prince who brought her the largest number of apples from the heap. The princes all jumped on the heap and began to fight each other to grab the most apples. Only Prince Sangram Raja stayed away from the fray. At the end of the day Didda noticed that the number of apples that Sangram brought to her were about the same as what the others had, but there wasn't a scratch or wound on them. And that he hadn't battled his brothers to obtain the apples. This impressed her and Sangram succeeded Didda. (He went on to prove quite an inept king. Perhaps his behaviour with the apples indicates why. See also 'The History of Kashmîr' and the chapter on 'Poonch'.)

The next available reference to Kashmîrî apples dates to Mirza Haidar Dughlat's 16<sup>th</sup> century '*Tārīkh e Rasheedi*', in which Dughlat praised the fruit.

*Apricot*: It is grown extensively in Kargil, where the harvested fruit is left to dry on rooftops. (Since the 1970s it is also being dried on curved metal sheets, which concentrate the rays of the sun on the fruit because of the curvature.) The kernels yield an oil (*stigumur* in Ladâkhi) which is valued in Leh. The tree yields a soluble gum. Its wood is hard and used for the 'hardcovers' between which Ladâkhi manuscripts and books are bound. It ripens in the early summer.



**Birch:** *Betula tartarica*. The *bhojpatr*—bark of this tree—is what all ancient manuscripts of Kashmîr written on. (Some survive in the archives.) It is used as waterproofing on roofs, for the tubes of the *hukka* (tobacco pipe), and for umbrellas.

**Cherry:** Cherry is locally known as 'glass'. There are two varieties, *habshee* (dark) and *surkh* (red). In some parts the bird-cherry is also grown. It ripens in the early summer.

**Chinâr:** This majestic tree (*Plantanus orientalis*) is believed to have been brought to Kashmîr from Farghana (Central Asia), Iran or Turkey. But by whom? By the Mughals? Certainly not. Because when Jehangir came to Kashmîr he could 'go inside' a particularly large tree while 'riding on a horse, with five other saddled horses and two eunuchs'. So, Chinârs were widespread in Kashmîr well before the Mughals. Apparently, some Mughals saw the reddened leaves of a Chinâr grove in October and thought that the forest was on fire. 'Chee nâr ast?' ('What flame is that?') a Mughal is said to have exclaimed. The name stuck.

I once came upon a 15<sup>th</sup> century miniature. It was painted almost one hundred and fifty years before the Mughal conquest of Kashmîr. It shows the Shankarâchârya hill and temple—and several chinârs.

And it is not just in the Valley that you find the Chinâr. It is *native* to several parts of Jammû province, too, including Sudh Mahadev and the low altitude Chirhai Muttal (both in Udhampur), apart from having been grown forcibly (with stunted results) in Jammû town and even in Delhi. So, clearly the Chinâr is indigenous to Kashmîr. What the Mughals (especially their much loved governor Ali Mardan Khân, 1642-1657) did was to get a Chinâr-cum-poplar grove planted in every village of the Valley. (It is very difficult to grow a Chinâr. Barley is planted around the sapling to speed up its growth.)

Where do you get to see a Chinâr? Everywhere in Kashmîr, even though it's still quite a rare tree. Its best grove in Srînagar is the Naseem Bâgh where the University campus now is (next to Hazratbal). A kilometre from Radio Kashmîr and the Tourist Reception Centre, Srînagar, is an elite school called the Burn Hall. Opposite the school is a cricket stadium inside the city's second best Chinâr grove. The leaves are 'afame' in October and the first fortnight of November.

The Dogrâs declared the Chinâr a 'royal' tree, a protection which continues to this day. This means that you'll be jailed for felling a Chinâr tree. Its girth is normally around 12 metres (less than 40'). Its wood, when available, is used in furniture and for the making of papier mache boxes.

Historian G.M.D. Sufi writes, 'The Chinâr trees make delightful camping grounds, where they afford a cool and very welcome shade in the hottest part of the day.'



**Chîr:** See 'Pines' below.

**Currant:** Grows wild in some parts of the Valley and is cultivated in Baltistan (POK).

**Cypress:** Locally called the sa-roo. Its wood is common but valued because it is durable. Grows in many parts of the state, including the Shyok valley (Ladâkh).

**Daphne:** Grows between 5,000' and 8,000' and is called *sanarkat* in Kashmirî. Its bark yields a fibre of which strong ropes are made. Paper is made of its bark.

**Deodar trees:** (The Himâlayan cedar.) Grows between 7,000' and 12,000' (that's theoretical; up to 9,000' is more realistic). Attains a height of 100 to 200 feet (30 to 70 metres) and a girth of 20 to 40 feet (6 to 12 metres). Its timber is so durable (and thus valued in the construction of buildings) that bridges made of it have survived for more than 400 years. Gives a dark, strong-smelling, medicinal oil.

**Elm trees:** The small-leaved elm is found in the lower valleys of Kashmir and in Tagar (in Nubra). Its wood is more open-grained and less valued than English elm.

**Fir trees:** Silver and spruce firs grow in Bhaderwâh and Padar (both in Doda, Jammû) between 8,000' and 11,000'. Its wood is not much valued. Grows up to heights of 100' and diameters of 5'.

**Flowers:** There are major meadows in almost every district of Kashmir. There are wild flowers on these meadows-and cultivated and wild flowers elsewhere. Many places in all three regions of the state take their names after flowers: Gulmarg (the meadow of flowers), Gulabgarh ('the fort of the rose' or 'the fort of King Gulab'), Poshiana, Posh Pathri (posh means flower), even the Siachen glacier.

Flowers found in the state include the anemone, aquilegia, crocus, daisy, gentian, geranium, iris-purple and white, marsh marigold, poppy-blue, potentialla, primula, rose, and saxifraga,

**Fruit:** It is not my hopeless infatuation with Kashmir which makes me assert that it is the best place in India better than even Hyderabad for fruit-lovers because there is a new fruit every five or six weeks. (I have also counted at least four or five blossoms during the course of a year and am trying to put them all together in one garden, for the public to see and share my love.)

Lal Ded, the mystic poet, however, was inspired differently by this periodic blossoming of flowers and fruit. She said that signs that Kalyug (in this context, doomsday) had come would be that pears, apples and apricots would ripen at the same time, and that mothers and their grown up daughters



would, leave their homes together to frolic all day and make merry in the company of strangers.

The 1890 *Gazetteer*, on the other hand, goes even further than I. It says, 'Hügel, a sound and well-informed botanist, ... considers Kashmir superior to all other countries in the abundance and excellence of its fruits'. Of course, one writer of the Raj placed Kanadahar (Afghânistan) higher. Yet others complained, as Girdlestone did, that 'it is rare to get any fruits of first-rate quality in Kashmir, simply because they are allowed to run wild, no heed being given to manuring, pruning and grafting'. Things have changed somewhat since. However, point is well taken. Nature has blessed Kashmir with an incredibly fertile soil. We humans too should do our bit.

**Grapes:** At least twenty varieties, of which four are of foreign origin, grow in the Valley and ripen in September. Other varieties are found in particular parts of Kargil. Unripe grapes (*kur*) yield fine vinegar.

**Hazel:** Found at around 8,000'.

**Herbs:** The forests of the state abound in herbs, medicinal and other. In officialese they are called MFP (minor forest produce). These include the *kuth* (costus spicatus).

**Holly:** *Kursu* is abundant in Bhaderwâh (Doda, Jammû).

**Iris:** Four species are found in Kashmir: the white, the purple (both found in graveyards), the yellow and the mauve. Flowering season: April and May. The root yields medicines and dyes.

**Juniper:** Called *yettu* locally. Grows at 11,000'. Along with rhododendrons, it provides the only fuel available at that altitude.

**Lotus:** Grows on the lakes of Kashmir, especially the Dal. Popular species: the *pamposh* (*Nymphaea lotus*) and the *Nelumbo speciosum* (Egyptian water lily). Blooms in August and September. After that the plate of the leaf begins to decay. It is boiled till tender and eaten as a delicacy. The Hindus revere the plant (because it is the seat of Lakshmi and Saraswati Devi ji, and of Sri Hanuman ji). The Buddhists even more so because of its association with Lord Buddha. Its bean is eaten unripe. (See also 'Walnut' below.)

**Lucerne:** Grown in Ladâkh and used as fodder for cattle.

**Mango:** Grown in Jammû, especially in the Basohli area.

**Mulberry:** Eight different varieties grow in abundance in Kashmir and parts of the Indus valley. In such abundance that the fruit rots on the tree and is mostly eaten by bears. Its wood is hard and used in furniture and boats. Its leaves are considered the best fodder for cattle. (See also 'Silk' in the chapter on 'Handicrafts')



**Oak:** Grows between 8,000' and 11,500'. Officers of the British Raj observed the curious fact 'that on the south side of the Kashmir valley [Ānañnāg?], one does not see the oak and rhododendron, although the elevation of the ground corresponds to that where, on the other side of the Panjab [Jammū-i.e. Doda?] hills, these trees are abundant.' All Himālayan species are evergreen. Their timber does not float. One species is locally called kray-oo.

**Olive:** Grows in the Chenab valley. Its wood is strong and heavy, and used as tool handles and for other mechanical purposes.

**Peach:** Ripens in the early summer. There are two principal varieties, sweet (*modur tsunum*) and sour (*tyut tsunum*).

**Pears:** There are two main kinds, the hard and the juicy, the *nākh* and the *baggu-goshā*. The *Gazetteer* says that 'the *nak* pear has the preference, both for eating and preserving'. I suppose tastes vary. Many of us prefer the fruit 'when overripe and decaying, like the European medlar', as the same *Gazetteer* puts it elsewhere. And it is the *baggu-gosha* that gets 'overripe' and succulent. Both ripen in the late summer.

Its wood is good for carving; that of the wild pear is brown and compact. Printing blocks in Ladākh are made of pear wood.

**Pines:** Grows most commonly between 3,000' and 4,000'. At lower altitudes (as low as 1,400') it is stunted. Sometimes found at 5,500'. Exudes sweet smelling resin and turpentine, yields pine needles and its bark is good for charcoal.

**Plum:** Does not grow wild in Kashmīr-only when cultivated. The fruit is very popular, especially baked into the famous plum cakes of Jee Enn Bakery (on Maulana Āzād Road in the heart of Srinagar). Ripens in the early summer.

**Pomegranate:** 'Dān' in Kashmīrī, there are three principal varieties, which ripen in September. The rind is used in tanning and as a medicine, the husk in dyeing and the fruit, too, in medicines.

**Poplars:** The Valley has two varieties: the local Kashmīrī poplar and the Kabul poplar. In Nubra (Ladākh) poplar is common till the south side of Shyok.

**Quince:** Known locally as the *bam-tsunt*, and ripens in October. Its seeds are used as medicines.

**Rajma(sh):** The vegetarians of Jammū and Punjab like nothing better for their Sunday lunch than well-cooked red beans (*rājmā*). These are grown in many parts of Jammū province. The best rajma comes from Bhaderwāh. The rajma of Banni is a close second. (Banni and Bhaderwāh are neighbours.) The longer this kidney-shaped bean the better it is supposed to be. Bhaderwāh beans are the longest of the lot.



This is a hard lentil (pulse), the hardest of all lentils eaten in India. Therefore, it takes much longer to cook than other lentils. It is also that much more difficult to digest. Therefore, it is eaten over lunch so that it gets more time to be digested. Most people cook enough rajma at a time to last two or three meals. The leftovers are kept in the fridge and reheated when needed. They taste better with each subsequent reheating, because this hard bean takes several reheatings to absorb the spices. It also grows softer when stored overnight in a cooked form.

**Raspberry:** Grows in some parts of Kashmîr.

**Rhododendron:** Grows at high altitudes, around 11,000', known locally as *tâzak tsun*, its wood is brown and brittle and useful only for fuel. Its flowers are made into a jelly. To be found aplenty trekking between Marbal and Singpur (Day 3 of the Akingam-Kishtwâr trek in the chapter on 'Trekking in Kashmîr').

**Rice:** Jammû grows the finest *basmati* rice in India-much superior to that of Dehra Dun. Within Jammû the best *basmati* is grown in R.S. (Ranbir Singh) Pura, in Jammû district. Bishnah, also in Jammû district, too, grows good *basmati*. The rice is harvested and stored for a year or two before it is eaten. 'Old *basmati*' tastes infinitely better. Therefore, *basmati* from the most recent harvest is always the cheapest in shops.

The Kashmîris do not use *basmati* in their cooking. They prefer a thick, inexpensive, coarse variety, because of its odour, flavour and ability to blend with their rich cuisine.

**Saffron:** The 19<sup>th</sup> century scholar Dr. King observed that it took 7,000 to 8,000 flowers to yield 17.5 ounces of fresh saffron, which by drying is reduced to 3.5 ounces. This is why saffron is the world's most expensive botanical product-making it among vegetables what caviar is to the animal kingdom. Spain and Iran are the only other saffron growing areas in the world.

**History:** As its botanical name (*Crocus sativus*) suggests, saffron was first grown in Croycus (now known as Korghoz), near Syria. The Arabs took it to Spain in A.D. 961. It is believed to have been brought to Kashmîr in the reign of King Lalitaditya (A.D. 725-753). (According to a newspaper article, saffron was brought to Kashmîr in 500 B.C. The article does not substantiate its claim, therefore I tend to go along with the Lalitaditya theory.)

**Areas where grown in the state:** Within J&K saffron is grown mostly in Kashmîr, and within the Valley mainly in Pâmpore and Parihâsporâ. However, the Mughal royals preferred the saffron of Kishtwâr [Doda district, Jammû province], which still produces fine saffron. Kishtwâr saffron doesn't smell as sweet but has a stronger dye.



Why can't this very expensive product be grown everywhere? For one it can only grow on clayey soil—a 'light ferruginous clay' to be precise, between 1,500 and 2,400 metres above the msl. The place must receive between 30 and 40 cm. of rain and be covered with snow in winter. The temperature must be sub-temperate. Only well drained loamy soils can grow saffron. Tracts of land that have such alluvial soil are known locally as *karewas*. There are five saffron-growing *karewas* in the Pâmpore area, 12-20 km. from Srinagar, all on the right bank of the Jehlum. The national highway goes right through saffron fields. So, if you travel between Srinagar and Jammû or between Srinagar and Pahalgâm, there's just no way you'll miss these fields.

Despite the best efforts, it has not been possible to significantly increase the number of areas where saffron is grown. Government attempts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to grow saffron on the nearby Damodar wudar, in the Yech pargana and near Martand, all failed, though the soil and climate were similar to Pâmpore. However, the government has been successful in growing saffron with profit in parts of Budgâm district, which are close to Pâmpore and where the soil is similar.

*Appearance and Uses:* When sold saffron looks like little pieces of straw, red-coloured, around an inch or two long and as thin as straw.

The flower whose stamens saffron is made of is called *kong* or *kong-posh* in Kashmirî and *Crocus sativus* in botany. In Arabic-Urdu-Persian the final product is called 'zâf-rân' and in Hindi 'kay-sir' (rhymes with 'fir').

The flower has six petals and six stamens. Three yellow stamens surround three red stamens. Red (and white) stamens alone are used in the final product; yellow stamens are given to the cattle. Each of the stamens/ stigmas used has a style that is around 5cm. long.

*Genuine vs. Fakes:* Journalist Amit Gupta writes, 'Genuine saffron forms a loosely matted mass of dark, reddish brown, flattened stigmas with a strong characteristic odour and bitterish taste. The stigma is tubular, about 25mm. in length, narrow at the base but broadening towards the upper extremity.'

*Varieties:* Three categories of saffron are sold in shops: shahi, mongra and lachha. The three types have been listed in the order of quality and price,

*Uses:* Saffron is eaten, smelt and valued for the strong colour it discharges. It is used for the preparation of Ayurvedic and Unani medicines, Roman perfumes and the exotic qehwa (herbal tea). Many Hindus smear a paste, the *tilak*, on their foreheads after the morning prayers. The paste contains some saffron.



Saffron is also used as an ingredient in expensive foods, e.g. certain kinds of pulao (pilaf) in central India and in some Kashmiri meat dishes. The Ladakhis have traditionally bought saffron in large quantities (1,600 pounds a year). Not to mention Hindus from Kashmir to Kerala.

Saffron is supposed to be a diuretic, a stimulant and even an aphrodisiac. It is also said to be good for people suffering from diseases of the brain, heart, liver and stomach. What this author can vouch for is that drinking saffron *qehwa* generates considerable heat within the body. It thus provides an internal shield during Kashmir's cold winters.

*How saffron is grown:* Saffron grows from bulbs, not seeds. The plant is so short, rising hardly six inches above the earth, that one has to sit on the ground to pluck the flowers.

The land is ploughed and divided into squares of roughly  $2.5 \times 2.5$  metres. These squares are called *kingwari* and 72 tolas of bulbs are planted, in July or August, into each. The corms are dormant during the summer. The bulbs are placed about 6 inches (15 cm.) apart, at a depth of around 10 inches (25 cm.).

Put another way, 5 lakh (0.5 million) corms of the correct size are planted on one hectare of land. Together, these 5 lakh corms weigh 40 quintals. A corm should weigh around 10 grams and have a diameter of between two and five grams to be considered suitable for planting.

Having planted the bulbs/ corms, the farmer can relax for the next ten- or even twenty-years, that being the life of each bulb, because no fresh planting needs to be done every year. Besides, you can neither irrigate nor add fertilizer/ manure to the soil where saffron is grown. However, the surface soil needs to be dug up three or four times a year. The crop is good if the soil has just the right moisture (too much is bad) and if the rains had been plentiful in April and May.

The yield is low in the first year, better in the second year and best from the third to thirteenth years, after which it starts going down again. (I am assuming a 15 to 20-year variety. Regardless of type, yield is best from the third year onwards.)

After the soil has yielded saffron for 10 to 20 years it has to be left fallow for eight to twelve years. (If saffron was yielded for only six years, depending on the variety, then that land is left fallow for just five years.)

*Yield:* In Spain, one hectare of land yields as much as 16 kilograms of saffron. The yield in Kashmir is just two to four kilos per hectare. For that reason some Kashmiris believe that their saffron is superior. On average, a corm yields six daughter corms every year.



**Bloom:** The flowers bloom for about three weeks from mid-October to the first days of November. To see them during the day is nice. But seeing (and smelling) them on a moonlight October night is an experience emperors would crave for. Take the 17<sup>th</sup> century Emperor Jehangir, for instance. He wrote, 'I accompanied my father [Emperor Akbar] to this spot [obviously Pampore] during the season of flowers...The appearance [of the flowers] is best at a distance, and when they are plucked they emit a strong smell. My attendants were all seized with a headache, and though I was myself at the time intoxicated with liquor, I felt also my head affected.'

This connection with midnight is rooted in botany, not romantic poetry. The flowering of saffron takes place between 1 and 5a.m.

**Plucking** starts in October and continues till early December. The flowers have to be picked in the early morning, before the dew evaporates and before the sun starts getting hot. Apparently the flowers contain some fragrant oils which are volatile. These oils are damaged when exposed to sunlight.

**Honey:** There is some-no, not much-snob value attached to honey produced by bees that have fed on saffron. A 1945 publication of the state government wrote, 'Nectar is found in saffron flower at the base of the style and droplets of a sweet liquid ooze out from the peduncle after the flowers have been cut. Bees collect this liquid. The old bee-keepers of the Valley believed... that no honey is ripe for removal from the hives till the bees have collected their harvest from the saffron flower.'

**Sandalwood:** On the authority of Elmslie, the *Gazetteer* states that 'there is said to be a forest of sandalwood (*tsandum*) in Wama Divi, in the Kuthar paragana, beyond Islâmad [Ânañnâg]'.

**Sycamore:** These are found in Padar (Doda), to the north of River Chenab.

**Strawberry:** Grown in Guréz and, increasingly, in the hot plains of Jammû, including Jammû city. Ripens in Kashmîr in the early summer and in the plains in the winter.

**Vine:** See 'Grapes' above.

**Walnut:** (Please also see the chapter on Handicrafts, the section on walnut. Walnut seeds are sown in March and germinate by May. In seven years they grow into trees that yield fruit. However, the annual yield is at its best after the tenth year. Their fruit ripens in the middle of September, when the trees are beaten and the nuts-four to six thousand per tree per year-fall to the ground. The green outer rind falls off in the process and is used to yield dyes (for cloth and walnut wood), ranging from green to almost black. The tree grows mostly between 5,500 and 7,500 feet above the msl.



Walnut oil is used in cooking but does not burn by itself, unless mixed with other oils, such as linseed. The four principal types of fruit bearing walnut are: *kâghazi* (i.e. paper-like), the yield of which is the lowest but the fruit of which is the best and the tree of which has the finest shade; *burzal*, which is not as good as *kâghazi*; *bulbul dun*, which has such a soft shell that nightingales peck holes through it; and *wânt*, which is the most common variety and the fruit of which is the most plentiful.

After a few years of high yield, the amount of fruit a tree produces in a year starts tapering off. Now these trees start sprouting leaves and branches in abundance. Two or three years of a good yield are followed by as many years of no fruit. Walnut wood is hard and darkens with age. It is used in the manufacture of furniture, especially cabinets, gunstocks and handicrafts.

The bark of the walnut tree is one of the finest Indian tooth-cleaners, serving as brush and paste rolled into one. In India walnut trees grow in Jammû and Kashmîr alone.

When trade with Tibet was possible, walnut oil was exported from Kashmîr in large quantities. Funnily, the fruit has traditionally been considered 'useless' (e.g. by Sir Walter Lawrence, and by the market). The Kashmîris mostly used the fruit to crush oil out of it, and would export the bark (as *dârun*) to the Punjab. It was only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the fruit itself began to be valued as an 'export'.

**Waternut, horned:** (*singhârâ*) Locally known as *gâree*, *goroo* and *gor*. 60,000 tons of it grow at the bottom of the Wular lake. Ripens in October. It is dried and ground into a flour of which cakes are then eaten, especially by Pandits during their fasts, who say that the Goddess Lakshmi brought this fruit to Kashmîr.

**Willow:** (*Salix alba*.) Two kinds are found in the Valley: the *muska veer* (musk willow) and *vota veer*. The weeping willow is rare, but found at half a dozen places in Srinagar city itself, including the Civil Secretariat. Probably an import from Britain. However, the weeping willow has always been a native of Rattan Peer, which is to the south of the Panjal range. Also grows in Ladâkh. Grows up to 10 metres (30').

**Yew trees:** Found plentifully between 9,000' and 10,500'. Its bark is sometimes used as a tea in Ladâkh. Not very tall, though with a thick, 'naked' trunk.



## Wildlife, Sanctuaries, Fishing

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### Birds

Jammû, Kashmîr and Ladâkh are located on the 'flyway route' of birds migrating from Siberia to the plains of India. Because the state has a large number of lakes and rivers, it plays host to many of these birds. In all it sustains almost 300 species of birds. Several birds visit Kashmîr in summer in order to breed.

Within the state, in winter most birds come down from the high mountains to places like Srinagar City, which are at a relatively low altitude. For that reason, the 'best viewing seasons' mentioned elsewhere in this chapter are normally in winter as far as birds are concerned.

The following is a listing of some of the important species native to or found or seen in the state:

**Baldcoot:** Breeds on the banks of lakes in Kashmîr.

**Bee-eater:** Visits Kashmîr.

**Bulbul:** Seen in the lower altitudes in winter.

**Chakor:** Found in Kashmîr.

**Chough:** The *chunka* is common in villages.

**Crane, black necked:** Also found in the state.

**Crane, gigantic:** Frequently found in the marshes.

**Crow:** Two species are found in Kashmîr. One is totally black. The other has a whitish neck. 'It is said that the white-necked crow is eaten in parts of Kashmîr, the flesh being considered especially nutritious in cases of bronchitis.' (*The Gazetteer*, 1890)

**Cuckoo:** Called the *byal kuk* in Kashmîri. 'Byal' means 'seed'. Kashmiri farmers plant seeds only after the cuckoo's singing indicates that it is time to do so.



**Dabchick:** A water bird found in Kashmîr.

**Dipper:** Visits the state.

**Duck:** Found in several parts of Kashmîr, certainly in almost every corner of Srinagar city. Near lakes, on lakes, on drainage channels, crossing the roads. Also found on the lakes of Jammû, especially the Mansar. 'Many of the ducks are destroyed by eagles, who take up their residence in the neighbouring mountains for the purpose of preying upon them.' (*The Gazetteer*, 1890)

**Duck, wild:** A water bird found in Ladâkh near the Rupshu lakes. Ducks are even more likely to be found near the bigger rivers.

**Duck, white-eyed:** Found in Kashmîr.

**Eagle:** Found in Kashmîr.

**Finch:** Visits Kashmîr.

**Flycatcher:** Visits the state.

**Fowl:** The common domestic fowl, along with ducks and geese, is plentiful in Kashmîr. Capons (*kheys kokar*) are bred in the Lolab valley. The domestic fowl is reared in Leh and Nubra.

**Kingfisher:** Seen in the state, especially in the Dal Lake.

**Gadwall:** A water bird found in Kashmîr.

**Goose, bar headed:** Found in the state.

**Gull:** Seen in the state.

**Grebe:** A water bird found in Kashmîr in autumn and winter.

**Grosbeak, black and yellow:** It comes down to the lower valleys in winter.

**Hawk:** Found in Kashmîr.

**Heron:** One of the three species found here is the same as in England. It is considered important [because it yields] the feather-tufts worn in the turbans of the chieftains of rank. Each heron has two feathers, which grow downwards from the back of the head; and these in the moulting season are carefully collected by men who watch the heronries for this purpose. The birds are often netted, and, after their feathers have been plucked, are set free. A fine is inflicted for killing one... The feather-tuft, the badge of dignity [is] fixed in a funnel shaped stem, covered with gold wire and often richly jewelled. Numerous herons may be distinguished at their [favourite] fishing stations, and the common king-fisher is seen at every corner of the lake, breasting the sun for an instant, and then dropping into the water like a falling emerald.' (*The Gazetteer*, 1890)



The Eastern Grey Heron is one of the species found in the state.

**Hoopoe:** Common in Kashmîr.

**Moorhen:** (dabchick) Breed near the edges of lakes in Kashmîr.

**Nightingale:** The *bulbul* is found in Kashmîr.

**Oriol(e), golden:** The *poshmul*. A summer-bird, comes down to the lower valleys in summer. Commonly found.

**Parrot:** Not indigenous to Kashmîr but common in Jammû, including the city.

**Partridge, grey and snow:** Found in Kashmîr.

**Pelican:** According to *The Gazetteer*, a small kind of pelican is found in the marshes.

**Pheasant:** Varieties found include the snow pheasant, *koklas*, *kullich* and the Argus. In Kashmîri poetry and idiomatic language it is high praise to say that a woman walks like a pheasant.

**Pheasant, monal:** The male is brilliantly coloured. Comes down in winter.

**Pintail:** A water bird found in Kashmîr.

**Pochard:** A water bird.

**Raven:** The large raven (*porok*) is very frequently found in villages.

**Quail, common:** Found in Kashmîr.

**Shoveller:** A water bird found in Kashmîr.

**Snipe, jack:** A water bird found in Kashmîr.

**Sparrows, cinnamon:** Seen in the lower valleys in winter.

**Stork:** Seen in the state.

**Starts:** They visit Kashmîr.

**Swallow:** Visits Kashmîr.

**Swallow, sea:** See 'Terns' below.

**Terns:** They gather by the thousand in and around the Wular lake, right up to the Jehlum.

**Thrushes:** They visit the state.

**Tits:** They visit Kashmîr.

**Vultures:** Species found in Kashmîr include the Bearded Vulture.

**Waterfowl:** Every species of waterfowl is to be found in Kashmîr, and in plenty, in winter when they come down from the colder Yargand and Mughalistan. They leave when spring begins.

**Water hen:** Found in Kashmîr.

**Woodcock:** Found in Kashmîr.

**Woodpecker:** Visits Kashmîr.



# The birds (avifauna) of Dâchigâm<sup>1</sup>

Family : Ardeidae

Grey heron *Ardea cinerea*

Pond heron or Paddy bird *Ardeola grayii*

Little egret *Egretta garzetta*

Family : Anatidae

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Widgeon *Anas penelope*

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Family : Accipitridae

Black-eared kite (large) or Indian Kite *Milvus migrans lineatus*

Sparrow-hawk *Accipiter nisus nipalis*

Short-toed eagle *Circus chrysactes*

Black eagle *Icthyophaga melleocephala*

Golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

Himalayan griffon *Gyps himalayensis*

Bearded vulture or lammergeier (or lammergeyer) *Gypaetus barbatus*

Family : Falconidae

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus japonensis*

Family : Phasianidae

Monal pheasant or Impeyan *Lophophanes impeyanus*

Chukar partridge *Alectoris chukar*

Koklas pheasant *Pucrasia macrolopha*

Family : Charadriidae

Common sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Family : Columbidae

Blue rock pigeon *Columba livia*

Wood pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Rufous turtle dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

Indian ring dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Slaty-headed parakeet *Psittacula himalayana*

Family : Cuculidae

Pied crested cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*

Indian cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Small cuckoo *Cuculus poliocephalus*

Family : Strigidae

Barn owl *Tyto alba*

Little owl *Anthus noctua*



Family : Apodidae

Alpine swift *Apus melba*

Family : Alcedinidae

Lesser-pied kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

Common kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

White-breasted kingfisher *Halycon smyrnensis*

Family : Meropidae

European bee eater *Merops apiaster*

Family Coraciidae

European Ruller *Coracias garrulus*

Family : Upupidae

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Family : Picidae

Wryneck *Jyna torquilla*

Scaly-bellied green woodpecker *Picus squamatus*

Black-naped green woodpecker *Picus canus*

Him  layan pied woodpecker *Picoides himalayensis*

Brown fronted pied woodpecker *Picoides auriceps*

Yellow fronted-pied woodpecker *Picoides mahrattensis*

Family : Laniidae

Grey-backed shrike *Lanius tephronotus*

Rufous-backed shrike *Lanius schach*

Family : Oriolidae

Golden oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Maroon oriole *Oriolus traillii*

Family : Dicruidae

Grey or Asy Drongo *Dicrucus leucophaeus*

Family : Sturnidae

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common mynah *Acridotheres tristis*

Family : Corvidae

Yellow-billed blue magpie *Cissa flavirostris*

Jackdraw *Corvus monedula*

Jungle crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Carrion crow *Corvus corone*

Raven *Corvus corax*

Black throated jay *Garrulus lanceolatus*

Yellow billed or Alpine cough *Pyrhocorax graculus*

Family : Campehagidae

Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*

Longtailed minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*

Family : Pycnonotidae

White checked Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys*

Black bulbul *Hypsipetes madagascariensis*



Family : Muscipaidae

Variegated laughing thrush *Garrulax variegatus*  
 Paradise flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*  
 Redbilled babbler *Stachyris pyrrhops*  
 Sooty flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*  
 Rufous tailed flycatcher *Muscicapa ruficauda*  
 Kashmir red-breasted flycatcher *Muscicapa subrubra*  
 Black-caped sibia *Heterophasia capistrata*  
 Streaked laughing thrush *Garrulax lineatus*  
 Little pied flycatcher *Muscicapa westermanni*  
 White browed blue flycatcher *Muscicapa leucomelanura*  
 Slaty Blue flycatcher *Muscicapa leucomelanura*  
 Grey-headed flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

Sub. Family : Sylviinae

Large-billed bush warbler *Bradypterus major*  
 Plain or yellow browed leaf warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*  
 Grey headed flycatcher warbler *Seicercus xanthoschistos*  
 Tickell's leaf warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*  
 Palla's leaf warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*  
 Large crowned leaf warbler *Phylloscopus occipitalis*  
 Gold crest *Regulus regulus*

Sub. Family : Turdinae

Himālayan ruby-throat *Erithacus pectoralis*  
 Magpie robin *Copsychus saularis*  
 White caped red start or River chat *Chaimarrormus leucocephalus*  
 Blue whistling thrush *Myiophonus caeruleus*  
 Tickell's thrush *Turdus unicolor*  
 Greywinged blackbird *Turdus boulboul*  
 Blackbird *Turdus merula maximus*  
 Plumbeous (?) redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*  
 Little fork tail *Enicurus scoulex*  
 Black-backed fork tail *Enicurus immaculatus*  
 Spotted fork tail *Enicurus maculatus*  
 Hodgson's grandala *Grandala coelicolor*  
 Dark-Grey Bush chat *Saxicola ferrea*  
 Stone chat *Saxicola torquata*  
 Grey headed thrush *Turdus rubrocanus*

Family : Troglodytidae

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Family : Cinclidae

White breasted dipper *Cinclus cinclus*  
 Brown dipper *Cinclus pallasii*

Family : Prunellidae

Alpine accentor *Prunella collaris*



## Family : Paridae

- Grey Tit *Parus major*  
 Green backed Tit *Parus monticolus*  
 Crested Black Tit *Parus melanolophus*  
 Black Tit *Parus rufonuchalis*  
 Yellow Checked Tit *Parus xanthogenys*  
 Fire Capped Tit *Cephalopyrus flammiceps*

## Family : Sittidae

- European Nuthatch *Sitteuropaea nagaensis*

## Family : Certhidae

- Himâlayan Tree Creeper *Certhia Himâlayana*

## Family : Motacillidae

- Yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava*  
 Yellow headed wagtail *Motacilla citreola*  
 Grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*  
 Pied or white wagtail *Motacilla alba*  
 Large Pied wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis*

## Family : Zosteropidae

- White eye *Zosterops palpebrosa*

## Family : Ploceidae

- House sparrow *Passer domesticus*  
 Cinnamon Tree Sparrow *Passer rutilans*

## Family : Fringillinae

- Gold-finch *Carduelis carduelis*  
 Himâlayan greenfinch *Carduelis spinoides*  
 Common rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*  
 Pink Browed rosefinch *Carpodacus rhodochrous*  
 Redmantled rosefinch *Carpodacus rhodochylamys*  
 Redbrowed rosefinch *Callacanthus burtoni*  
 Orange bullfinch *Pyrrhula aurantiaca*  
 Redheaded bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythrocephala*  
 Black and Yellow grosbeak *Coccothraustes icterioides*  
 Red breasted rosefinch *Carpodacus puniceus*

## Family : Emberizidae

- Rock bunting *Emberiza cia*  
 Grey headed bunting *Emberiza fucata*  
 White capped bunting *Emberiza stewarti*

## Land Animals

The following is a selective listing of species that spend at least part of the year in the state:

**Antelopes:** Several species are found in the state. The *gural* (Himâlayan chamois) is native to Kishtwâr and the Panjal range. Travels alone or in couples. Its horns grow to around eight inches.



**Barhal:** An 'enigmatic' mammal, because it is not clear whether it is a sheep or a goat. Found in Kashmîr as well as Ladâkh. (Also spelt and pronounced 'Bharal.' Also called the *napoo*.) Has long horns, just under a metre long, and its flesh is considered a delicacy. Also see 'Sheep, blue'. Almost never found below 13,000' even in winter. In summer goes up to 16,000'

**Bears:** Found all over Kashmîr, including in Srinagar city itself (in the Pari Mahal-Raj Bhavan-Royal Springs International Golf Course area). Major habitats include the Nowbug and Lolab valleys. They normally do not attack humans unless attacked or irritated first. Of course, when they attack they normally crush the victim to death.

**Bears, Himâlayan black:** (*Ursus Thibetanus*) Called the 'hâput' in Kashmîri.

They waken in the spring, after their winter hibernation. They mainly eat herbs and fruit but can be carnivorous as well. To this extent they are infinitely more dangerous than brown bears. They spend the summer at altitudes between 10,000' and 12,000', i.e. near the tree-line. When fruits ripen, they visit the fields and create havoc there, destroying crops and corn-fields. In autumn they ransack maize fields when they come down to the villages in the lower valleys. They move out after sunset. In this author's experience they venture out only when it is fairly dark.

*Where found:* All over the Northwestern Himâlayas, especially in the Dâchigâm National Park. These bears are found at altitudes lower than those in which brown bears live, and are smaller than the brown kind.

*The Asiatic Black Bear* lives on the edges of forests and on steep wooded hills. In winter, it migrates from the high mountains to the warmer hills lower down. It hibernates in winter. The rare black bear that is seen in winter is likely to be weak and sickly.

Most black bears are nocturnal. They start looking for food after sunset and sleep after sunrise. However, in Dâchigâm and its neighbouring areas, black bears have been seen moving about even during the day. They are expert climbers.

*Food habits:* Black bears eat wild fruit, berries, wild pears, apricots, maize and nuts. In autumn they mainly eat the resin of pinus because other foods are hard to get. The mating season is in late autumn and cubs are born in early spring.

**Bears, brown:** (Mainly, the *Ursus Isabelina* [*Kashmîriensis*] or *Ursus arctos isabellinus*) In Kashmîri they are called the 'gura haput'. They hibernate in winter.

*Where found:* Reddish or brown bears are between six and seven feet tall and live in the lower ranges. In summer they live well above the snowline,



on barren, open peaks. In Dâchigâm, they have been spotted in upper Dâchigâm, between Dagwan and Nagaberan.

*Food habits:* In the initial weeks of summer they eat wild fruit, herbal roots and fresh grass. They also hunt marmots and similar animals. As summer progresses, they steal the cattle, sheep and goats of the recently arrived Gujjars and Bakerwâls. In autumn, they eat berries, wild fruit, apricots, peaches, mulberry and nuts.

Mating takes place in the first part of summer. Brown bears try to stay away from men and never kill humans.

**Camels:** The double-humped Bactrian camel is found in some parts of Leh district. Mahârâjâ Gulab Singh, who seems to have been an absolute visionary in these matters, introduced camels on the Murree-Bârâmulâ route. Remnants of his scheme can still be seen in parts of Jammû district, in the rural areas behind Nagrota.

**Cats:** Commonly found in the state.

**Cat, Jungle- (*Felis Chaus*):** This is a common wild cat found almost everywhere, including Dâchigâm. It prefers grasslands, scrub jungles and the reedy banks of rivers. In Kashmir, these cats are found near towns, among rocks and in old buildings. The jungle cat is often active during the day. However, it prefers mornings and evenings. It preys on small mammals, birds and on poultry.

**Cat, Leopard- (*Felis bengalensis* or *Felis viverrina*):** This nocturnal animal is found in the forests of Kashmir, especially in Dâchigâm. It preys on small birds and animals. Leopard-cats normally rest in the hollows of trees. Sometimes these cats have been seen moving about during the day as well.

**Cattle:** Cattle are so abundant in the state that an entire community, the Gujjars, which constitutes more than 18% of the state's population, is mainly dedicated to rearing cattle on a commercial scale. Smaller communities do so, too. Then there is domestic rearing.

Buffaloes have always been in short supply in Kashmir, as 19<sup>th</sup> century records indicate. Which is why with all that cattle, milk production is always less than the demand. Buffalo bulls and buffalo cows are not indigenous to Kashmir but are found in the hills all the same.

Common horned cattle are not at all common in Ladâkh. At most they might be found in the lower parts of Ladâkh. The Himâlayan counterparts of common Indian oxen are widely found in Nubra and the warmer regions of Ladâkh. Yaks, or, more accurately, their descendants, are the type of cattle common to Ladâkh. (See 'Yaks' below.)

**Deer, barking-:** Locally called the *khakar*, it barks whenever alarmed, and in the evenings. Found only on the southern side of Kashmir and on the western and southern slopes of the Pîr Pañjâl range.



**Deer, musk- (*Moschus chryogaster*):** (Called 'roos' and 'rous' in Kashmiri.) This is a rare species, mostly because it has been hunted and killed through the centuries for its musk-pods. There is no real need to kill the animal because in China musk is extracted from the living animal deer without causing it any injury. Its population is also declining because leopards, foxes and yellow throated martens eat it.

This small and shy animal is found in the lower parts of Ladâkh, and in Kashmir at altitudes around 7,500' (including Dâchigâm). It is also found in Warhwan valley (Jammû) and Tilail.

The musk deer prefers high mountains, woodland scrub and birch forests. It lives above the zone where pines grow. When it comes down to the lower hills it seeks the safety and protection of dense forests. It likes to be alone and often tries to conceal itself. The musk deer feeds at dawn and dusk and prefers lichens, leaves and flowers. The breeding season is January and the young are born in June.

**Dogs:** In particular the Bakerwâls (shepherds), who live in the mountains, keep large, ferocious dogs that protect their flock as well as them from wild animals.

Large packs of wild dogs have traditionally roamed about and caused damage in-Lâr, Dachinpara and several other parts of the Valley, as well as in Warhwan in Dodâ.

There is a breed of pointer dogs in the mountains near Râjourî. The 19<sup>th</sup> century British writer Vigne also noticed another breed of very small dogs, somewhat resembling the fox-dog, but smaller. He saw one that stood only eight inches high over the shoulder, but was long in proportion, with a sharp nose and a bushy tail, and covered generally with long white hair. Such dogs are said to have been imported from Chambâ.

**Ermine:** Found in Kashmir.

**Fish:** There is a separate section on fishing and under 'Sports'.

**Fox:** A 'large, full-brushed Meltonian' variety is common in Kashmir, where it is known as the *luhv* or *luhf*. The flying fox, locally known as the *usgagor* is found all over Guréz, especially when the season has just begun. This fox prefers to live amidst brushwood. It frequents cultivated land.

**Fox, red (*Vulpes vulpes*):** The Red Fox is found in Ladâkh and Kashmir. It prefers bush woodlands. There it digs a burrow under the ground to live in. Or it might live among rocks or under the cover of dense vegetation. It is a nocturnal animal. Hunger might force the stray Red Fox to come out during the day, though. It is a loner. Its diet changes with the season and depends on what is available. Also on what that particular fox has grown to like. The Red Fox preys on small rodents and birds: pheasants, partridges, marmots and voles. This monogamous animal is said to pair for life. Red



Fox couples are known to live in the same place for years at an end. This home is often a burrow with more than one opening.

**Goats:** The Kashmiris prefer the mutton of sheep to goat-flesh.

**Goats, mountain:** i) The *surrow* or *buz-e-kohi* lives in the Sind valley and Dachinpara in the Panjal. Not commonly found. ii) The *thar* (known as *kras* in Kishtwâr), too, lives in the Panjal range, in Warhwan, Kishtwâr and Banihal, on rugged and dangerous terrain. It is bigger than the surrow (which is about three feet or a metre high), though both have horns of about fourteen inches (about 35 cm.) each. The *thar* develops a splendid fleece as it grows old.

**Hângul:** See the section on 'The Hângul' later in this chapter.

**Hare, Himâlayan Mouse-(*Ochotona roylei*):** The Himâlayan Mouse Hare is found all over the Himâlayas. In Kashmîr, good places to find it are the mountains above Dâchîgâm. It lives on open rocky grounds above the tree line. There it resides under rocks and heaps of stones. The steep slopes of pine forests are another place where it might be found. In forests, it burrows under the roots of trees. Its diet changes with the season-and availability. It eats coarse grass.

**Horse, domesticated/ ponies:** Kashmîr has always had good horses of its own. Polo has been popular since at least mediæval times. Mahârâjâ Gulab Singh imported stallions-including Arab and Turkish ones-and mares. He earmarked grass reserves for horses and ponies in general, because of their importance as transport in the hills. They carry passengers as well as goods. This dependence has not lessened even in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The ponies of the Dachinpara area, on the banks of the Lidder, are considered the best.

**Hyenas:** Rare in Kashmîr.

**Jackal (*Canis aureus*):** Jackals have been seen in the Himâlayas. They come out after sunset and retire at dawn. They are also active by day. During the rutting season, they come out looking for water to drink. They also like to lie in the shade of forests. Jackals sometimes hunt in packs for small deer or antelopes.

**Kashmîri stag:** See 'Hângul' later in this chapter.

**Lañgûr, Common: (*Presbytis entellus*)** Langurs live on trees. Or, as scientists would put it, they have arboreal habits. Langurs live in unisex groups. They are sexist but not ageist. Their groups consist of langurs of all ages. They tend to live in harmony with other members of the group. Therefore, these groups stay together for years, if not forever.

In winter, there is almost nothing to eat in the snow-bound mountains. This forces most of them to migrate to the plains of the Valley. However,



many spend their winters on pines and firs, even though these trees might be enveloped in snow.

Langurs are vegetarians. They live on wild fruit, flowers, buds, shoots and leaves. In winter, they are known to eat climbers, including the Climatus grata and Hedera nepalensis. For this reason they devastate gardens.

As is the case with other relatively weak animals, the size of their groups increases in autumn and winter. Which means that two or more smaller groups merge when they come down to their winter home. This is obviously because the enemy, too, comes down to the plains when it gets cold. The leopard is their main predator. When they see or sense a beast of prey or some other danger, they start making guttural sounds of alarm. This warns the other members of their group. This sound is very different from the whoops of joy that they voice when they hop from tree to tree.

The Dâchigâm National Park is one of their countless winter homes. It is not unusual to find langurs there throughout the year.

**Langur, Himâlayan gray:** Also comes down to the lower reaches in winter. Goes back to the higher mountains in summer.

**Leopards<sup>8</sup>:** (*Panthera pardus millardi*) This is an endangered animal and a sub-species of *Panthera pardus*.

*Places where it might be found:* Almost everywhere. Leopards don't need forests or dense groves of trees to flourish. They do quite well in the open country, among rocks and scrub. For this reason they come in contact with humans quite often: including in Srinagar city. Other things being equal, they would prefer to live near pastures, so that they can eat cattle.

They kill and eat close to everything. They prey on birds, deer, langurs, monkeys, large rodents and smaller beasts of prey.

I know of at least one instance (which took place in the summer of 2001) when they killed a human, a BSF soldier, who had gone to the rocks above Srinagar's Pari Mahal for his early morning ablutions. The Wildlife Department of the State has recorded a leopard attack on women in Dâchigâm, one November day in the 1990s, when the women were walking through a dense grove.

Leopards tend to walk on roads, paths and tracks beaten through forests by other animals. They breed throughout the year. In Kashmir they are found in the Dâchigâm National Park, lower Dâchigâm and on the road from Panzgam to Phalipora, especially in winter, even more so when there is snow.

*My own sightings of leopards (and bears, and 'near sightings' of kanguls):* It was around 9pm on a September evening in 1997. Two friends, Gautaman Bhaskaran (of *The Hiñdû*) and Chandâ Nârang (a filmmaker and chirû-goat/ shahtoosh expert), and I had walked down from



the Raj Bhawan<sup>1</sup> to the Dal Lake. We were sitting on the embankment known as the Cheshma Shahi gh  t. By day this is an extremely busy intersection, and even at 9pm there is some traffic. A jeep came from behind and parked itself right behind us. We found that a bit of a nuisance. After a while an officer got out and said, 'We were wondering if you knew that there's a leopard right across the road.'

We had been planning to walk back, but now we gratefully accepted the officer's offer of a lift. The leopard was less than a hundred metres from the Boulevard. So, what had brought him there? The bones and other leftovers of the meat that BSF (Border Security Force) soldiers camping near the Boulevard had eaten.

A year before, in the summer, Dr. Mridu Rai (see the chapters on 'People' and 'Paintings') and I were walking up from the Cheshma Shahi to the Nehru Guest House. There is a dry nallah (stream) between the two. It was quite early, just after sunset, and the sky was still fairly bright. A large leopard came hurtling down the nallah just as we got there. It was running so fast that it didn't notice us. In case it had you wouldn't have had to suffer much of this book (it was much slimmer in 1997).

The next time that Mridu came visiting, we decided that it was too risky to go to those woods in the fading light. So this time we resolved to return to the Raj Bhawan by 5.30pm. As we were walking down from Pari Mahal, just when the densest part of the woods came to an end, we saw a BSF soldier walking uphill in our direction. 'I suppose that you know that there's a leopard right above you, on that rock near the electric pole,' he said.

Our blood froze. The Raj Bhawan was still almost two kilometres away. The leopard, on the other hand, was ten or twelve feet above us. Getting a lift in a vehicle was not even a possibility. We just prayed hard and slinked away. (Poor you: for I lived to complete this chapter.)

I have spent almost nine 'years' in the Cheshma Shahi-Raj Bhawan-Pari Mahal woods of Srinagar. (By nine 'years' I really mean four full-years and five half-years, May to October.) This is an exclusive area because the Governor lives in the Raj Bhawan. Casual visitors have not been allowed into these woods since 1990. As a result the greenery has been left untouched and there are more trees and shrubs than ever before. This has led to a noticeable increase in wildlife. A family of four leopards and a group of black bears—also four—live there, the bears throughout the year and the leopards in the cooler months. One hangul has sometimes been spotted in

<sup>1</sup> Gubernatorial palace. I was His Excellency's Principal Secretary (chief of staff) then.



the area. So have been several foxes, countless jackals (well-fed ones at that), some wolves and several snakes, including poisonous ones. Perhaps there are some hyenas, too.

During these nine years I have sighted leopards six times. On four of these occasions my guests and I were within a leap or two of the leopard. This is a fairly easy animal to sight, even in spring and autumn. If I haven't seen leopards more often, it is purely because I walk through those woods only when I have guests.

Animals are supposed to be scared of fire. Once when we got really delayed in those woods, and it was very dark, I passed this nugget of information on to my friends Mustafa Quraishi and his sister Sarah. None of us smokes. So we neither had matches nor a cigarette-lighter. Mustafa is a photographer with *The Indian Express*. He very brightly informed us that he had a flash-gun with which he would scare all animals away. When we reached the densest (and darkest) part of the woods, I told my friends that this was where there had been a leopard right above Mridu and me. So, Mustafa promptly clicked his powerful flash-gun. The light blinded all three of us. We could no longer see the black road. Once again prayer-and-guesses about where the road was-got us through.

Bears are much easier to sight than leopards (and even easier to hear). They spend all their lives in an area that is four miles square. I have seen their nocturnal movements for so long that I have developed a system on how to spot them. In a nutshell, their movements vary with the length of the day, and the weather. In June, when days are the longest and it is quite warm, bears come out later in the night than, say, in October when days are shorter and colder. Or, to make it simpler still, I have noticed that bears reach the woods across the road from the Nehru Guest House between 9.30 and 10 at night during the two warmest months. If you follow this system and have patience, you are almost guaranteed a sighting of bears within two days.<sup>2</sup>

2 Is that a big deal? I assure you that it is. A group of us went to Thekkady in Kerala (South India) to sight something as obvious as an elephant. At the sanctuary we saw several glorious species of birds but not a single elephant, despite a four-day wait. Nor did any of the other groups there. I believe that the probability of such sightings can be predicted mathematically, because during the day-long drive through the woods between Munnar and Thekkady a herd of wild elephants suddenly rushed past us.

Similarly, some British friends spent several days at Dâchigâm without managing to see a hangul outside the enclosures.

I believe that if you study the behaviour of animals like bears (who have set habits) and certain birds long enough, you can develop a system that greatly improves the chances of a 'sighting.'



Foxes are the other animals that you will almost certainly see in this area at night: and very close to the Boulevard at that. I haven't yet spotted a hangul in the wild. But there is one that ravages gardens near the Nehru Helipad (which is near the Palace Hotel and also close to my hut in the Raj Bhawan) and then proceeds to the Royal Springs Golf Course at night. The next morning we see signs that the killjoy had been there, unfortunately when we were sleeping.

But I haven't told you about the fourth time that I came very close to a leopard. This was in February 1994, when there was snow all around. I was looking out of the window of my Raj Bhawan office around noon when I saw the sweetest little leopard cub on the hill slope a few feet from the window. You know how human toddlers are when they gingerly take their first steps: they seem lost in some deep, but happy, thought as they take each hesitant step. That's exactly how that leopard cub looked, even though with four legs it did not have the same fear of falling down. There was the same smile on its face as wordless human babies have when they gleefully take their first steps. And its eyes had the same faraway look.

**Leopard, Snow-:** (*Uncia Unica*) Also known as the white leopard, the snow-leopard is called the 'shena seh' in Kashmîrî. It is an elusive animal, very difficult to spot. (Two Germans spent an entire winter with me in Zâñskâr trying to photograph this hard-to-get mammal. We spotted some rare ibexes instead: but even those not close enough to photograph.)

This is an endangered species. It has been called a 'survivor from the frigid Pleistocene era.'

*Places where it might be found:* The snow-leopard is found throughout the Himâlayan range: the higher mountains of Kashmîr and Ladâkh being more favoured than most of the other Himâlayas. People have 'sighted' it quite often in the Suru, Warhwan and Nubra valleys. It is believed to live in Zâñskâr, too. More likely places to spot it are the Hemis High Altitude Park (Ladâkh), the Dâchîgâm National Park, Overa, and the mountains of Kishtwâr (Jammû) and Chângthâng (Ladâkh). Within these areas, look for relatively narrow and steep ridge valleys.

In summer, it lives amidst rocks and cliffs, above the tree line. In winter, it comes down to the villages of the lower valleys and hills, when its prey does the same.

*An indicator of the health of an ecosystem:* The snow-leopard hunts at night and eats the ibex, barhal, markhor, wild goats, sheep, musk deer, hare, marmots and large birds.

The presence or absence of snow-(or other) leopards in a Himâlayan forest tells us a lot about how good or bad the ecology of that area is. Or, as scientists would put it, this animal is a 'natural indicator' of the ecological



health of that 'ecosystem.' If you have actually read the entries in this chapter so far, especially those on the hangul, the musk deer and the langûr, you might have noticed that a) leopards eat them all, and b) when these 'prey' animals come down from the cold mountains in winter, so does their predator, the leopard. They are the leopard's food. Therefore, the leopard follows them wherever they go.

So, if there are plenty of leopards (snow-or otherwise) in an area (all right, 'in an ecosystem') it means that the animals that it eats ('the prey species') must also be there in good numbers. Now, these 'prey species' are mostly vegetarians ('herbivores'). If there are many of them in an area, this indicates that there are plenty of trees and shrubs of the right type in that 'ecosystem.' And if males and females of these species are found in more or less equal numbers in an area, this would suggest that their population is likely to remain the same or even increase. Or, as scientists would put it, this means that 'normal reproduction' is a 'predominant feature' of that 'ecosystem.'

You might have also noticed in this chapter that while other animals eat each other (or vegetables), no one eats the leopard. Thus, the leopard is at the top of the food-chain. That is why it is the 'apex carnivore' in most Himâlayan forests.

**Lynx:** Called 'patsalov' in Kashmîrî. Lives in Kashmîr and Ladâkh. Seeks shelter in forests, and amidst tall grass and reeds.

**Markhor:** (In the 'Jammû' volume please see the chapter on 'Poonch' and, within it, the section on 'Wildlife'.) Called Raphoche in Ladâkhi. This 'serpent-eater' is a very large goat. The markhor of Astor (now in POK) has huge, flat horns, which rise with just one sweep. The type found in the Pîr Pañjâl has horns that are much smaller and rise upwards with two-and-a-half or three twists (the third twist might be incomplete). Also lives in the Kâzinâg range.

This migratory animal moves around the Behram Gala pass (in Poonch) and in the middle mountains between the Kishan Ganga and Jehlum rivers. It lives on 'dangerous ground' but not on the high mountains where the ibex does. Prefers dense birch and pine forests. Grazes on the grassy glens of these forests. Rarely goes above the snow-line.

Markhors travel in herds. They feel most secure from attack when housed amidst precipitous crag and rock. In December the older ones join the females and younger males. In spring they break company again.

**Marmot, docile, Marmot, Himâlayan** (*Marmota bobak*) and **Marmot, Longtailed** (*Marmota caudata*): Marmots are found in the higher Himâlayas, especially in Ladâkh and the mountain ranges to the North of Kashmîr, especially near the holy Amarnâth ji cave-shrine. (Also in Garhwal in the



north Indian state of Uttaranchal.) The Himâlayan and Longtailed Marmots are found at different altitudes.

This cat-sized animal lives in groups in large colonies. It hibernates in deep underground burrows all through the winter. During much of summer it is too groggy to react to hunters. Its responses are rather slow. Hence the epithet 'docile'. Even a child can walk up and grab a marmot, especially for its attractive golden-brown skin. However, don't even try. You'll be causing major offence to religious sentiment in Ladâkh if you do. It's considered most sinful to kill a marmot. You can see why.

A species called *drin*, *dring* or *pua* in Kashmîri is frequently preyed upon by the eagle. It's loudly when in danger. Found only at high altitudes (8,000' to 14,000'), amidst rocks. It is dull yellow in colour, with a darker stripe on its head, back and tail.

Marmots eat grasses, leaves, roots and the seeds of plants.

**Marten, Beech- (*Martes foina*) or Stone-:** In India, apart from Sikkim (north-eastern India), beech martens are found only in Kashmîr. They have sometimes been seen in lower Dâchigâm, and even less frequently in Upper Dâchigâm.

Stone martens live in the temperate and alpine parts of the Himâlayas. They live above the tree line, in forests as well as on barren mountains. They nestle in the hollows of trees, under logs, in holes in the ground and amidst rocks. In the higher mountains they prey on voles and the mouse hare. In forests they hunt squirrels and attack birds. They also eat cherries. Stone martens mate in February. Their offsprings are born in late April.

**Marten, Yellow-throated: (*Martes flavigula*)** This Himâlayan animal lives in temperate forests: preferably those that are below the tree line. (It also inhabits sub-tropical and tropical forests, e.g. the east Indian state of Assam.) The yellow-throated marten hunts by day as well as night, but prefers the hour immediately before dawn. It scours the ground for prey. However, trees are its preferred hunting 'ground.' That's where it finds squirrels and the birds' nests. It scans nests for eggs and young birds. It also eats hares, partridges, pheasants, rats and mice. It has a special talent for jumping from one branch of a tree to another.

**Mice:** Commonly found in the state.

**Monkeys:** In Kashmîr they are found in the Lolab valley, in the forest near Gulmarg and in the lower portion of the Kishan Ganga valley. Commonly found in Jammû City.

**Mongoose:** Found in Kashmîr.

**Mules:** Mules, whether in the areas bordering Kulu, Kângrâ and other parts of HP, or those in regions neighbouring Yaqand, have proved to be the sturdiest animals in the mountains when it comes to carrying loads.



**Otter, common:** (*Lutra lutra*) Locally called the *uder*. The Kashmiris also call it the *kula oddur*. Found in most of the rivers of Kashmir, often under bridges. In summer, when fish, especially carps, migrate upstream to spawn, otters too travel up torrents and streams. They eat fish. Therefore, they have to go wherever their prey does. In winter they come back to the streams of the lower mountains.

They live amidst boulders and rocks. Also under the roots of trees that grow by the banks of rivers. They are often found lying in fern brakes, reed beds and bushes. Given a choice they would live in a cold place: in the hills and mountains, or near high-altitude streams and lakes.

In the Dâchigâm National Park they are found all over River Dagwan and the nallâh (stream). They frequently attack the fish of the Fisheries Breeding Farm at Dâchigâm. Otters hunt at night. They also eat crabs, frogs, rodents and water fowls. Their skin is much valued.

**Ovis Ammon:** See 'Sheep, wild'

**Ovis Orientalis:** Known as the 'shapoo' and 'urial' in the Punjâb. In the areas of Kargil under Pâkistâni occupation (Baltistan, Astor, Bunji) it is called the 'oorin'. Found in most parts of Ladâkh, mainly along the Indus. It lives on steep, grassy, hill-slopes above forests.

**Panther:** Known as the 'seh' in Kashmir. Found in forests as well as in inhabited areas. In the forests panthers hang around the paths commonly taken by other animals. They go to villages to eat up dogs and other domesticated animals.

**Pigs:** Mahârâjâ Gulab Singh introduced them in to Kashmir. Because of the Muslims' aversion, his descendant (perhaps Mahârâjâ Pratap Singh) got rid of all pigs from Srinagar. However, some pigs escaped into the woods and are found there in a wild state.

**Porcupine, Indian:** (*Hystrix indica*) Found in some regions of Kashmir; also in Kishtwâr. In the Dâchigâm area it has been seen in Phaliphora in February, at Waskar at other times and in big numbers between Drog and Kavnar.

The porcupine lives on the rocky sides of hills. It thrives on all kinds of lands and topography—moist as well as arid, open land as well as forests. During the day it nestles in caves, amongst rocks or in burrows. The porcupine is essentially a vegetarian. It eats fruits and grains. However, it also chews the bones of dead animals and the horns that deer have shed. From these it obtains the calcium and lime that it needs to make its quills grow.



**Rat, Common House-:** (*Rattus rattus*) Commonly found in the state.

**Serow** (*Capricornis sumatraensis*) This is a 'goat antelope of the genus *Capricornis*, of [the] mountainous regions of eastern Asia, [and has] short horns and a dark coat.'<sup>iii</sup> It is called Ramu, Halj and Salabhir in Kashmiri. It lives throughout the Himâlayas between 6,000' and 10,000' and in Assam at lower heights.

The serow seeks protection from the weather in shallow caves and amidst boulders on the slopes of thickly wooded gorges. It eats grass, herbs and shrubs. Its mealtimes are around sunrise and sunset. The serow is a loner, but is very energetic. In the Dâchigâm National Park, a serow was once seen in a group of hanguls.

**Sheep, blue:** See 'Bharal' above.

**Sheep, domesticated:** The Bakerwâls (who live throughout the State), the Chopâns (Kashmîr only) and the Gaddis (Jammû and Himâchal Pradesh) are the three principal communities that rear sheep on a commercial scale. Kashmîr used to 'export' sheep to Jammû and other regions till the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Meat consumption zoomed after the 1950s. Since then Kashmîr has been a net importer of sheep. (See 'Wazwan'.) The Kashmîris eat only sheep meat. (Goat mutton is the norm in most of the rest of India.)

**Squirrel, Kashmîrî Flying-:** (*Hylopetes fimbriatus*) Found in Kashmîr.

**Stag, Kashmîri:** See 'Hângul'.

**Stone marten:** See 'Marten, stone.'

**Vole, royles:** (*Alticola roylei*) Found in Kashmîr.

**Weasel, Himâlayan:** (*Mustela sibirica*) Found in the state.

**Wolves:** Common in Kashmîr, in the barren higher mountains but not in the plains of the Valley. Also found in Ladâkh. They eat sheep, to the distress of shepherds for whom this is a huge economic loss.

When the nomadic shepherds move uphill to the mountain pastures in summer, so do wolves. In winter they come down and move about in the lower valleys, fairly close to the plains. In summer they live amidst thickets of reeds and scrubs. In winter they seek shelter in caves and amidst rocks.

## Reptiles and Insects

**Bees:** Farmers in Kashmîr often maintain several hives-sometimes as many as ten each-in their houses. When rural houses are built, cylindrical cavities are left in the walls of one of the floors to house the hives. These hives are removed every year in late September or early October.

**Frogs:** Found all over Kashmîr. In Srînagar city they live in the Dal lake.

**Lizards:** Numerous in Kashmîr.



**Mosquitoes:** 'It is probable that (between July and September) in no country in the world are mosquitoes found in such swarms as on the lakes of Kashmir and in their vicinity; any part of the body which may be exposed to their attacks becomes literally black with them... The only way to obtain even partial relief is to sit between pans of burning horse-dung, the fumes of which drive them away.' That was *The Gazetteer* writing in 1890. Their numbers have lessened considerably since, and wire mesh windows and chemical repellants have done away with the dung. However, if you are ideologically hostile to chemical lotions you know what to look for instead.

**Sand-flies:** Common between July and September.

**Scorpions:** The *puhur*. Plentiful in the Cheshma Shahi-Pari Mahal-Raj Bhawan area of Srinagar city. Also in the Dachinpura and Lâr areas. Their bite can be fatal.

**Snakes:** The snakes of the *kandi* (semi-arid) parts of Jammû and Kathuâ districts in particular (and Jammû region in general) are extremely poisonous and cause many deaths every year. Which probably is why snakes are worshipped (propitiated might be more accurate) in that area.

Snakes are almost unknown in Ladâkh, (A few non-poisonous species have been found.) Kashmir has several species of snakes (*har*). It is said that none of them is poisonous. This is not correct. Those in the Sind valley certainly are. Some areas beyond Pahalgâm are known for the *gunas* snake. In Srinagar City, snakes are found outside the municipal limits—in the Cheshma Shahi-Pari Mahal-Raj Bhawan area, for instance. The deadly Harwan Krait is to be found in this belt. Many of the other snakes of Kashmir are not venomous.

The Kashmiris say, 'There are no snakes in any place from which the peak of the Nanga Parbat is visible.' This essentially confirms what I said about Ladâkh. You can see the Nanga Parbat only from places that are at fairly high altitudes. There it will be too cold for snakes to survive. But what about places not that high?

There are instances of the cobra having been seen in Kashmir. Also the boa-constrictor, according to the 19<sup>th</sup> century traveller-writer Vigne. However, other writers feel that the Kashmiri *ajdâ*, mistaken for a boa-constrictor, is really an overgrown rock-snake.

Either way, I suppose you've got my point: there are several types of dangerous snakes in Kashmir. The *gunas*, common to the Lâr area (and in the rocky eastern parts of Kashmir), is one such. The Dachinpura area has venomous snakes. The Kashmiri *gulawut* (throat-catcher) is believed to lunge at a man's throat.



## Parks and Sanctuaries

It is advisable to wear khaki, green or camouflage in all these sanctuaries and national parks. Please do not disturb the animals with loud noises, radios, music playing systems, motorboats (if there's a river or lake nearby), diesel generators, etc. (I am thought of as a Luddite, an enemy of progress, because of my refusal to allow motorboats at many tourist destinations.) Please don't leave behind non-biodegradable garbage. Flash photography can irritate some animals into violence, and scare others needlessly.

National parks are a 'higher' category than sanctuaries.

### National Parks

**Dâchigâm National Park:** This is the prima donna of the parks and sanctuaries of the state. Dâchigâm means 'the ten villages', that being the number of villages which had to be acquired and resettled in order to create a wildlife sanctuary here. It covers an area of 141 sq. km. In the first half of the twentieth century it was the exclusive hunting preserve of the Mahârâjâ of the state. In 1951, it was converted into a national park. Entrance to various parts of the park is still strictly regulated. (Please contact the Chief Wildlife Warden, whose office is in the TRC, Srinagar.)

The flora of the park includes a silver-birch forest and conifers. It is the main home of the hângul, an endangered species of antler deer, akin to the European red deer, an endangered species. (See below.) The hângul (Kashmiri stag) has huge antlers and a white patch on its rump. The park has around twenty species of mammals in all, including black and brown bears, the musk deer and leopards. In addition it has more than 150 species of avifauna. There is also a trout (fish) farm in the campus.

The Drâphâmâ Guest House, where Prime Ministers Pt. Nehru and Mrs. Gandhi used to stay, is not available to tourists. However, theoretically it is possible to rent a hut in the Panzgam, Laribal, Gratnar or Sangargulu villages for an overnight (or longer) stay. A Tourism Department leaflet from the 1960s says, '[The park is] open throughout the year [and] there is no prime viewing season.'

### Biosphere Reserves and Wildlife Sanctuaries

('Biosphere Reserve' is the category that ranks after 'National Park'.)

**The Overa-Aru Biosphere Reserve:** 76 km. from Srinagar; close to Pahalgâm. Animals that live here include the musk deer, the brown bear and the leopard. There are many types of birds as well. This reserve begins at 3,000 metres (i.e. more than 9,500 feet) above the sea and goes right up to 5,425 metres. A government publication says, 'Prime viewing time for the upper areas is from May to August. In the lower areas, for bird viewing



the best time is March to May and for animal viewing from September to March.' Self-catering holiday cottages can be booked through the Chief Wildlife Warden, TRC, Srinagar, who also authorises entry into the reserve.

**The Overa Wildlife Sanctuary:** Spread over 32 sq. km. More than a dozen species of mammals (best season: September to April) and eighty types of birds, notably several species of pheasants live here. (Best bird watching is between March and August.)

**The Gulmarg Biosphere Reserve:** 48 km. from Srinagar. This reserve covers an area of 180 sq. km. It is at 2,400 metres above the sea (around 7,500 feet) at its lowest and climbs up to 4,300 metres (almost 13,000 feet). Mammals: the Himâlayan musk deer, bears—both brown and black—and the red fox. Best season: September to March. Birds: highland species, migratory as well as resident.

**The Gulmarg Wildlife Sanctuary** was declared a sanctuary in 1987. Its boundaries: In the north are the Butapathri/ Bâbâ Réshî Forests; to the south is the Poonch Forest Division; the eastern boundary consists of the Bunadawas/ Drang Forests; and in the west are the Khanpathri Forests and the Poonch Forest Division. The sanctuary is spread over 139.25 square kilometres. It is more or less rectangular. It falls between 33° 55' and 34° 06' North (latitude) and between 74° 17' and 74° 29' East (longitude).

There is a majestic mountainous range, with moderate to steep slopes, around the sanctuary. Among the important peaks in this range is the Affarwat Peak (4143 metres). The area drains the Ferozpora Nallah as well as several smaller streams that join it.

The sanctuary aims to protect, conserve and multiply the endangered musk deer as well as the Himâlayan Brown Bear, the Leopard and other animals and birds found in the area.

**Flora:** The vegetation in this area is both diverse and pretty. It contains coniferous forests as well as ornamental 'ground flora.' The main types of forests within the sanctuary are<sup>iv</sup>:

**Sub-alpine Forests** make up more than 80% of the sanctuary. The species that grow here include the Silver Fir (*Abies pindrow*), Kail (*Pinus wallichiana*), Spruce (*Picea smithiana*), Yew (*Taxus baccata*), Maple (*Acer pictum*) and Haan or Horse-chestnut (*Aesculus indica*). Birch or bhoj patr (*Betula utilis*) grows in the 3000-3500 metre zone.

**Alpine Forests:** Above the tree line (10,000 feet) is a vast expanse of green alpine pastures. This is a series of lush meadows (*margs*). A rich variety of grasses and flowering herbs and shrubs, dotted with junipers and rhododendrons, grows on them.

**Fauna:** **The Musk Deer:** The Gulmarg Wildlife Sanctuary is the home of the musk deer (roos, in Kashmîrî) *Moschus moschiferus*. This is a 'critically



endangered species.' Legally speaking, it is an animal protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act. The climate and forests of this sanctuary make it an ideal habitat for the musk deer. This animal is found in the 2400-4300 metre zone. It lives in several types of high-altitude forests, where the juniper, rhododendron and skimmia grow. In winter it can sometimes be seen at altitudes below 2100 metres.

*Mammals:* The Gulmarg Wildlife Sanctuary is also the home of many kinds of mammals. These include the Leopard (*Panthera Pardus*), the Leopard Cat (*Felis bengalensis*), the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), the Yellow Throated Marten (*Martes flavigula*), the Him  layan Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*), the Him  layan Lang  r (*Presbytis entellus*), the Rhesus macaque/monkey (*Macaca mulatto*) and the Him  layan Black Bear (*Selenarctos tibetanus*).

*Avi-fauna:* The Gulmarg Wildlife Sanctuary also has a rich population of birds. It is the breeding ground of many rare species of resident pheasants and a number of summer migrants from other parts of the Indian sub-continent. The birds that visit or live in the sanctuary include Him  layan Monals, Common Koklas, Him  layan Snowcocks, Hoopoes, Woodpeckers, Crows, Nut-crackers, Bulbuls, Fly-catchers, Warblers, Chats, Thrushes, Dippers, Tits, Creepers, Wagtails, Sparrows, Pipettes and Owls.

### **The H  ngul (*Cervus elaphus hanglu*):**

This Kashmiri stag, a type of red deer, is close to extinction. The h  ngul is a variety of the 'bar  singh  '.

*Viewing season:* The h  ngul is a forest animal. It changes its feeding grounds with the season. Which means that it goes from one forest to another looking for good grazing grounds. Like many other animals, it lives in the lower hills in winter and goes uphill in summer.

The h  ngul sheds its horns in late March. It then climbs up to the top of the forest-line, where it still is winter. In contrast it is spring in the plains of Kashmir. By autumn (sometimes by late-August) the horns are likely to have sprouted again. By then the lower hills of Kashmir would have started cooling, too. So the h  ngul returns to them. This is when the h  ngul starts feeling horny. (I swear the pun crept in all on its own. Maybe that's how the word was derived.)

This is called the rutting season among male deer (and among goats and rams). The stags start calling out to their females, but this alerts hunters as well. H  nguls are trapped or killed when they are found outside sanctuaries. In winter, too, they tend to get completely 'legged in the snow', making them relatively easy to catch.

*Rutting:* This is 'an annually recurring condition or period of sexual excitement and reproductive activity in male deer.' For h  nguls it begins around mid-September and ends in the middle of October. During the rut.



adult males separate from other males, while females form groups. (Sounds familiar?) The fawns are born in May.

*Viewing time*: The best time at Dâchigâm is around sunrise and well after sunset. This is partly because during the day cars move about near the hânguls' favourite oak patch. The hânguls, naturally, find these cars a nuisance: and a danger to their lives.

*The horns*: The decorative rims of Kashmîrî saddles are made of these horns.

*Habitat/ Places where the Hângul is found*<sup>1</sup>: This endangered species lives only in the moist temperate forests of Kashmîr Valley, and some neighbouring areas. Holloway and Schaller noticed that this deer was found only in a region that was 65 km wide. This area is to the north and east of the Rivers Jehlum and Lower Chenab. It stretches from Zahurah in the north to Ramnagar (Jammû) in the south. The only place outside the state where a few Hânguls might be found is Siyabehi in neighbouring Himachal Pradesh.

The hângul spends the summer at high altitudes. It is found mainly in north Kashmîr and, theoretically, in Kishtwâr and Bhaderwâh. (See also 'Dâchigâm National Park' above.) In the Valley it is supposed to live in Bandiporâ, Nowbug, Dandwar and the Sind valley. Some stray groups of hânguls have also been seen in the Dârâ [Forest] Reserve, the Brain Reserve, the Khonmoa Reserve, the Shikargah Reserve, Lolab, Desu and the Overa Wildlife Sanctuary. In the 1990s, it was also sighted in the Raj Bhawan campus in Srinagar. It occasionally visits the erstwhile Srinagar City Forest (now the Royal Springs Golf Course). Hângul tracks have been found on snow at Waskar.

The best place to look for hânguls is the Dâchigâm area. So is the corridor between the Dâchigâm National Park and the Overa Wildlife Sanctuary.

*Social behaviour*: Hânguls move about alone as well as in groups of up to twenty-five members. In winter, bigger groups of as many as forty hânguls have been seen in Dâchigâm, especially near Drâphâmâ in the Nagpur oak patch. Hânguls go to oak patches to rest because these groves provide the best cover in winter. Groups break up in spring. Part of this segregation is along gender lines. Co-ed groups are hardly ever seen in the summer. (That's how stag parties got their name.) The hânguls are a matriarchal lot. The hinds [female red deer] look after the young, with no help from the stags. Mother-fawn relationships last only till the fawn can look after itself. Mature stags do not live with the hinds except during the rutting season.

Female hânguls form small groups during the summer. These sororities consist of between twelve and sixteen members. Stags move alone or in smaller groups of between two and nine.



Why do they form groups at all? Protection from predators is an obvious reason. In summer they feel more secure, so their groups are smaller. In winter even the predators come down to the lower hills. The weather, thus, is an important factor. Food is a third. Members of a group inform each other about where the best grazing grounds are.

Hânguls are quite territorial. Each group and, within a group, each member has its grazing territory. Like the human nomads of the state they have a winter territory in the lower hills and a summer territory in the higher mountains. A well-defined route (or 'corridor') invariably connects the two. Interestingly, just as the human nomads of the state think of the winter camp as their 'real home,' so do the hânguls. This is why Dâchîgâm is so popular with the hânguls. Most of them consider Dâchîgâm their 'real home' and repair to this sanctuary for the winter.

*What the hângul eats:* The plants that the hângul likes most are *Fraxinus hookeri*, *Jasminum humile*, *Haemerocallis fulva*, leaves of *Morus alba* and *Salix*. Its favourite fruit are *Aesculus indica* and *Quercus robur*. It also eats the *Smilax vaginata*, *Dioscorea deltoidea*, *Rumex patientia*, *Colchicum luteum* and *Polygonum amplexicaule*.

*Population/ An endangered species:* The population of hânguls in Dâchîgâm has been declining rapidly since the 1940s. Both Hindus and Muslims eat hângul flesh. So do leopards and black bears.

In 1940, there were around 3000 hânguls (according to A.R. Wani and Holloway). In 1947, this population was estimated at 2000 and in 1950, at 400 (Gee). In 1969, Schaller conducted a census during the rut. He felt that only 180 hânguls were left. Holloway (1970) counted just 140-170 hânguls.

And then, because of the government's efforts, the hângul population began to grow again. In 1971, Owen of the World Wildlife Fund did a detailed census and concluded that there were as many as 320 hânguls. At the time the J&K Wildlife Department was putting the number at 550. In March 1980, everyone agreed that the figure was at least 347.

In March 1983, the hângul population was estimated at 550. According to the Wildlife Protection Department in 1986 the number was 605. By 1988 it was as high as 860 (Mir Inayat Ullah).

And then came militancy. The decline resumed. In the early 1990s, the hângul population dropped to somewhere between 140 and 170. The Government stepped in again. By 1995, the population had risen to 290 (Rouf and Rashid). The 1999 census estimated that there were between 270 and 325 hânguls in Dâchîgâm proper, and between 435 and 520 hânguls in and around the Dâchîgâm National Park. The census of March 2000 estimated that there were 350-470 hânguls in the Park.



*Predators:* Leopards, black bears and snow leopards prey on the hângul. Of these, snow leopards very rarely visit Dâchigâm. However, leopards and black bears live in and around the Park. During the initial years of militancy (the early 1990s), some humans camping in those woods were without doubt responsible for the rapid decline in the hânguls' population. However, also because of militancy the average human has been too scared to go into the woods. Therefore, there has been an increase in the number of leopards and black bears in the area: right up to the Shankar-acharya hill, with Cheshma Shahi and the Pari Mahal in between. (The upside of this is that because humans have reduced their visits to this area, the illegal felling of trees, too, has declined sharply. The Zabarwan Mountains have much thicker forests now. And if your sympathies are with wildlife in general and not just with hânguls, there is much to celebrate.)

The hângul is one of the few mammals available for leopards to eat. Therefore, too, they have been disappearing fast. (So have been the dogs maintained by the Indian para-military forces in that area.)

### References

- i. This and some other entries in this chapter are based on a 'Checklist' given to me by Mian Javed Husein, Regional Wildlife Warden, Kashmir. I have followed the spellings used in the 'Checklist,' changing them only where I was certain.
- ii. Some details in this entry, too are based on the 'Checklist' given to me by Mian Javed Husein, Regional Wildlife Warden, Kashmir.
- iii. The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language.
- iv. Details about the Gulmarg Wildlife Sanctuary are courtesy Mian Javed Husein, Regional Wildlife Warden, Kashmir.
- v. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* © 1996 by Houghton Mifflin Company.
- vi. Several of the details about the Hangul given in this section are courtesy Mian Javed Husein, Regional Wildlife Warden, Kashmir.



## The Rivers of Kashmîr

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### The Jehlum

Kashmîrî Muslims call the Jehlum, by the names Veth, Vyeth and Behet. The Kashmîrî Pandits call it the Vitast(a) and Vyatast. The ancient Greeks knew it as the Hydaspes and Bidaspes. The rest of the sub-continent (and, officially, even J&K) knows this great river as the Jehlum. Maharaj K. Koul calls it 'The Great Artery of Kashmîr' while Arora has named it 'The Great Waterway of Kashmîr.'

*Origin:* It originates in Verinag, at the feet of the Panjal mountains in Ânañtnâg district in southern Kashmîr. Some 203 km. (or 195.2 km., depending on what you count) later, it leaves Kashmîr Valley at Kichhama near Bârâmullâ town.

The Kashmîrî Pandits believe that the river really begins at Vethvatru, a small spring near Verinag. It combines with streams at Ânañtnâg town (Islâmadabad). The river flows into the Wular lake. Here the river deepens and widens considerably. It then leaves for Bârâmullâ town. At this point the river is about 10' deep and roughly 100 metres/ yards wide. After that the river travels to Uri and finally Kichhama.

*Delta, plateaux:* The Jehlum's delta in Kashmîr is the huge Wular lake. On the wular's southern side are plateaux. These are alluvial in origin and about 300m. higher than the river bed.

*Towns on its banks:* On its banks several important towns were founded over the centuries, as were famous shrines and temples. The more important of these towns are Srinagar, Bârâmullâ, Sumbal, Hajan and Sopore. The Bamba tribe has traditionally lived on the river's right bank.

*Dimensions:* Maharaj K. Koul estimates that 'in its course from Khânabal to Banyari, the point where it enters the Wular, the fall of (the) Jehlum is 165 feet in the first 30 miles and 55 feet in the next 24 miles. From the point



where it leaves the Wular to Bâramullâ town, its fall is very slight. During winter, when the river is at its lowest, the average breadth is 210 feet and its mean depth is 5 feet.' He adds that 'the catchment area of the valley (is) 116 miles long (and between) 40 and 75 miles (wide). So, the Jehlum receives the rainfall of some 3,900 sq. miles.'

The river winds its way gracefully through Srinagar city for almost seven kilometres. There used to be as many elegant bridges over it in Srinagar. The number seven is considered lucky everywhere, and in the case of Srinagar the sobriquet 'the city of the seven bridges' had been around for centuries. So, when, in the 1950s, an eighth bridge had to be built, rather than jettison the figure seven, this bridge was simply named the Zero Bridge, a name it retains to this day when the number of bridges has crossed ten. The average width of the Jehlum while in the city is about 65 metres. Its deepest point in the city is at Batyar (near Ali Kadal), where it is almost eight metres deep in the summers and five metres deep in winter.

*Tributaries:* Many mountain streams and rivulets join the Jehlum during its journey in the Valley. Above Khânabal these include the Sandrin, the Brang, the Arpat from Kothar, the Kokernag and the Achâbal. Below Khânabal, the Lidder, a major river in its own right, comes down from the Târsar lake, collects the melting snows of the Lidder valley and merges with the Jehlum.

As the Jehlum continues its course, it is joined by the waters of the Arpal Nag spring, and the drainage from the Wasterwan and the mountains of Trâl.

At Shadipura the biggest merger- 'marriage' (*shadi*), to use the local expression- of them all takes place. At this point the Sind (Indus) empties itself into the Jehlum. The expanded river then passes through the gigantic Wular Lake after which it is joined, at Doabgam ('the village of the two waters') by just one more major stream, the Pohru, which brings with it the excess waters of the Lolab valley and water from the slopes of Kajinag. Parts of the Pohru (as those of the Sind and the Vishu) are navigable. The Ramshi stream is another tributary.

Tributaries that meet the right bank of the Jehlum are: i) Major tributaries: the Lidder and the Sind; ii) Minor ones: Arrah, Bandipur, Erin, Harbuji and Pohru.

Rivulets and streams that join the Jehlum on its left bank are i) the Veshau/ Vishu/ Vishav from Kokernag which meets it below Bijbehârâ; ii) the Rembiara from the Pir Panjal; iii) the Doodh Ganga from Ludarmarg, which merges with it south of Srinagar; and iv) the Sukhnag from the Gulmarg area. These tributaries drain the Pîr Pañjâl and are smaller than many of the tributaries that join the right bank.



*Quality of water:* The waters of the Ningal, the Sukhnag and the Sind streams are much favoured for drinking. Abdullah Khân, a medieval Governor of Kashmir, insisted on getting his drinking water fetched from the Ningal to Srinagar everyday. (The Ningal empties itself into the Wular, while the Sukhnag and the Ferozepur streams end in a marsh near the Jehlum.)

*Rafting:* Till the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century boats used to ply on the Jehlum. Till then, this, the biggest river of Kashmir, was also its main 'highway'. Boats plying on the Jehlum would carry men and materials from one end of Kashmir to the other. It picks up considerable speed between Bâramullâ and Kohala. It is navigable from Khânabal to Khadinyar, a village five km. ahead of Bâramullâ town.

However, in winter, beginning around November, the waters of the river recede, making navigation difficult, especially in the stretch just above Srinagar city. I have been trying to revive this tradition. In the stretch within Srinagar there were points where the bottom of our boat would hit hard objects, especially the remnants of old bridges.

*Time taken:* The Jehlum travels for 75 km. between Ânañtnâg and Srinagar. (The road distance between the two is only 56 km.) Boats travelling downstream cover the distance from Khânabal/ Ânañtnâg to Srinagar in around twenty hours. Upstream from Srinagar is different. Houseboats take four days. 'Light doongas' do it in around 2½ days.

A 'light doonga' will take half a day to travel from Bâramullâ to Sopore. It's another day and a half from Sopore to Srinagar, using the Nuru canal. In case you take the route through the Wular, add another two days.

The downstream boatripe by 'doonga' is much faster. The Srinagar-Wular journey takes about 20 hours. You can do Srinagar-Nuru-Sopore in roughly 22 hours. Sopore-Bâramullâ will take six hours. Downstream journeys by shikara will take half as much time.

Timings vary according to the time of the year and, thus, the level of the water.

*The rafting route:* The stretch on which boats can ply, from Ânañtnâg to Bâramullâ, is about 130 km. long. As we have seen they can sail upstream as well as down. After Bâramullâ the river enters a gorge and is extremely unsafe because its waters acquire great velocity. At the other end, in most months the journey starts at Khânabal. The short stretch between Ânañtnâg town and Khânabal is normally too dry to permit boating.



*The route is as follows:*

- Ânañtnâg
- Vazir Bagh (fine groves on both banks)
- Khânabal (has a Dogrâ era rest house)
- Bijbehârâ (six km. from Khânabal; old Hindu temple ruins near the bank)
- Sangam bridge (a mob burnt the old bridge in 1931)
- Avantipur (grand temple ruins; the Tral valley is above this village)
- Payech (Hindu temple ruins)
- Kakapur
- Ladoo (somewhat away from the banks are some Hindu temple ruins)
- Khunmoh
- Pampore (13 km. before Srinagar; Woyin and Khrew are nearby)
- Pantha Chuk (the old stone bridge is about eight km. from Srinagar)
- Pandrethan (three km. from Srinagar; temple.)
- Srinagar/Munshi Bagh
- Srinagar/Chhatabal
- Shadipur (25 km. north of Srinagar. From Shadipur to Sopore the route is normally through the Wular. However, when the level of the water is high, the Wular can be more or less bypassed by taking the Nuru canal, which connects Shadipur with Sopore.)
- Sumbal (five km. from Shadipur.)
- Andarkot (1.5 km. from Sumbal. See also the entries on 'Sumbal,' 'Shadipur' and 'Andarkot' in the chapter on 'Bârânullâ' for more about the channels that meet the Jehlum.)
- Hâjan (35 km. from Srinagar)
- Banyari (River Jehlum meets Lake Wular here.)
- Sopore
- Dubgam (11km. from Bârânullâ; a village on the right bank; River Pohru, which comes down from Lolab, meets the Jehlum here)



- Bâramullâ
- Sheeri
- Gântmul
- Bunyâr (Hydro electric power plant)
- Uri
- Lalpul (The last village under Indian administration. After that the river flows into the occupied Kashmir.)

*Hydel power:* Today, the 105 megawatt Lower Jehlum Hydel Power Project, the Valley's biggest, is fed by this river. The 480 MW Uri Hydel Project also draws its energies from the Jehlum.

*Floods:* The Jehlum overflows almost every third or fourth year. The plains of Ānañtnâg and Pulwâmâ districts, and thus parts of the National Highway to Srinagar, get submerged. Crops are destroyed and road traffic to and from the rest of India ceases till the flood abates two or three days later. Koul notes, "Many disastrous floods are noticed in the vernacular histories, but the greatest was the terrible inundation which followed the slipping of the mountain at Khadanyar below Bâramullâ town in 879 A.D. The channel of Jehlum was blocked and a large part of the valley was submerged. In 1841, there was a serious flood, which caused much damage to life and property. The flood of 1893 was also a great calamity... At the time of floods more than 45,000 cusecs is the daily discharge of the water excluding the breaches. In former times the villages lying along the river were obliged to keep the artificial embankments in repair (and) flood-gates existed... For many years this obligation had not been enforced, and under the supervision of Sir Walter Lawrence, the State Settlement Commissioner, the embankments below Srinagar city were repaired, and the floods of 1892 were kept in check."

The funny thing is that to an extent these floods are necessary. From 1998 to 2002 rainfall was very insufficient. Garbage piled up on the banks of the river. Several people actually started praying for a small flood. Their prayers were answered in 2003. Floods also moisten land and add to the subsoil water and the mini-floods of early 2003 were a relief.

*Taming the floods:* The Kashmiris have for centuries tried to prevent floods in the Jehlum. Suyya was the chief engineer of King Avantivarman (A.D. 855-883). He deepened the gorge ahead of Bâramullâ. In 1902, the Dogrâ Mahârâjâ employed European civil engineers to try to do the same again. They failed. Later in the Dogrâ era, perhaps in the 1920s, electrically powered dredgers were employed, this time with great success. The grand remnants of this large boat can still be seen grounded near a bank of the river in Bâramullâ town.



### The Sind River

This is a tributary of River Jehlum, it has two sources. The northern one originates near the dZoji La when the snow accumulated there melts. The other stream comes from the Dachinpara area. The two streams merge at Baltal to become the Sind. It now begins to flow with considerable speed and ferocity over large rocks. The gorge below Sonamarg is narrow and rocky. This stretch is difficult to navigate. Till Gagangir it mainly flows down a slope. The stretch above Gagangir freezes over during the coldest part of winter.

A few kilometres after Sonamarg the valley begins to open up, and the river begins to widen.

As it proceeds westwards, through the Sind valley, several tributaries join it. The Kanknai stream merges with it near Kajipura village (in the Lār area). The stretch between Shadipur and Ganderbal is navigable.

The Sind 'marries' (i.e. merges with) the Jehlum at Shadipur.

*The Sind Valley:* This is the largest of the many valleys that exist within the all-encompassing Valley of Kashmir. The old trade route between Kashmir and Central Asia went through this valley, much along the present National 'Highway.' The valley begins near Baltal and ends at Ganderbal. It is thus around 90 km. long.

After the green meadows of Sonamarg, we enter a gorge that is thickly wooded on both sides. Several rocky hillfaces here are used to train people in rock-climbing. The landscape then gives way to a pleasant, open river valley. Between Koolan and Gagangir (7,200') the river mainly flows over flat land. Here the river widens greatly, in part because of the centuries-old islands of *alluvium* that have formed inside it. Fir trees grow on these islands. The flat part of the valley begins shortly after Gund (6,500'). For a long while we remain in the river valley. Then, around Ganderbal, we enter a short wooded stretch.

Treks through this valley have been listed in the chapter on 'Trekking.' The best time to trek in most parts of the Sind Valley is June. July to mid-August is next best. However, snow on some treks does not melt till early July: the Lidder-Kûlan trek, for instance.

### The Lidder River

The sources of River Lidder ('the yellow river') are the glaciers of the mountains of Pahalgâm. Its tributaries include the Aru and Chandanwari 'nallahs'. Its waters are treated at Bumzoo and are the main source of drinking water for Ânañtnâg town and the villages around it. It flows into the Jehlum north of Ânañtnâg/ Islâmad town. The great King Zain-ul-Abidin got constructed a canal by which the waters of the Lidder were



conducted to the semi-arid Martand plateau near the town. The areas in and around Pahalgâm are known as the Lidder valley and include fascinating lakes like the Shesh Nag (see "Amarnâth yatra")

*The Lidder valley.* The valley is about 60 km. long. It begins at the glaciers of Kolâhoi and Shri Amarnâth ji and ends near Aish Muqâm, which is in the fertile plains. Western visitors have traditionally preferred Gulmarg as a resort. However, as a region the Lidder valley has been their favourite, especially for trekking. This is mainly because of the beauty of the place: with forests, meadows, glaciers and tall mountains.

### The Brang and the Sandrin

These rivulets have their origins in the Kokernag and Kapran areas respectively, both in Ānañtnâg district. They irrigate agricultural land, provide drinking water and play host to a large variety of fish, including the trout.

The **Brang** (also spelt Bring and Brengi) is one of the headwaters of the Jehlum. It takes its rise at the feet of the Brari Bal. It is known as the Tansan stream till it reaches Woyil (Woylu). There it is joined by a much larger stream which brings the waters of the Nowbug valley. As it goes further west and reaches Hillar, the waters of the Kokernag spring combine with it. Then just west of Ānañtnâg the whole stream unites with the Arpat and Sandrin rivers at village Harnag, west of Ānañtnâg.

The Brang is fordable throughout the year upto the Woyil. After that it is fordable mainly in winter. However, when the melting snow flows into it, the Brang becomes a large and somewhat difficult stream. Since mediæval times there has been a *kadal* (bridge) over it near Urigam.

The **Sandrin** (or Sandran), is one of the sources of the Jehlum. It rises in the mountains near the Nandmarg pass and flows through the Shahabad valley to Harnag. Its bed dries almost completely between Kut and Tamman. In any case its bed is broad and, therefore, not very deep. The melting snow makes it a vast torrent. The waters of the Vettarittar Nag merge with it.

### The Veshau/Veshav/Vishav

'The river of Vishnu', is one of the sources of the Jehlum. It originates at the feet of the Panjal range from the Konsa Nag spring in south-west Kashmir.

The *Ain-e-Akbari* says that the Veshau is a stream that 'issues picturesquely from an orifice in the mountain, and at the same place is a declivity down which the waters tumble from a height of 18 yards with a thundering roar.' It adds that 'Hindu devotees throw themselves down from [the] summit [of this mountain] and with the utmost fortitude sacrifice their lives, in the belief that it is a means of securing their spiritual welfare.'



In the beginning the river flows north. Then near Kangwattan the Chitti Nadi merges with it. A few kilometres later the Versini, flowing from the Budil pass, too, joins it. A little ahead, near the cataract of Arabal, the Veshau cuts through the rock and majestically flows down to the plains of Kashmir.

Thereafter, the Veshau flows south-east along the hills for two or three kilometres, before turning north. The clear stream with a bed of shingle goes through loam and in due course becomes a dirty but very wide (50 metres) river. That this was almost always so, and not the result of 20<sup>th</sup> century deforestation, is clear from the 1890 *Gazetteer*. A part of the Shopian area receives water from two branches of the Veshau. Wargama and Abulwana are watered by the Tougur branch. The Burni is the other stream. The Veshau meets the Rembiara stream at Nowana village. Together they pour into the Jehlum through the Sadarinaji 'nallah'.

### The Kishan Ganga

Known in POK as the Neelam, this river originates in Drass (Kargil). Its waters are extremely cold and play host to large quantities of trout. It meanders through the hills of Tilail, Guréz, Keran and Arnah, before emptying itself into the Jehlum at Domel (lit.: 'where the two meet'). Its waters have, even in centuries past, rarely been clear, carrying as they do detritus from the brittle mountains that they pass through.

*The route:* The river gathers strength in the Tilail valley. Therefore, some British Raj surveys place its origin there. It then flows west. After a while it is joined by the Raman Sind, which comes from the south. It then meets the wide Burzil stream, after which it bends towards the north-west towards the Guréz valley and the Dawar area. Thereafter, the river goes towards the south-west and pours its waters into the Jehlum near Muzaffarâbâd in POK. From start to finish the river is almost 290 km. long.

During the winters the upper part of the river, above Guréz fort, gets frozen almost completely.

Through most of its course the Kishan Ganga is either rough or has a very strong current or keeps dropping off heights, making it almost impossible to navigate. However, towards its end, near Muzaffarâbâd its velocity softens somewhat and, briefly, makes it navigable. From September to April, when its waters are low, it is fordable near Guréz fort and remains so till Sirdari village. The valley that it creates (shortly after Kanzalwan) is at most places too narrow and steep to permit cultivation or even human settlement. However, the same qualities make the course of the river rather nice to look at.



The road from Kashmîr to Skardu (in POK) begins at Kanzalwan, near the source of the Burzil stream. It goes through the upper part of the Kishan Ganga valley. Indo-Pak relations being what they are, the road is in disuse. However, even when the state was united, the road would get snowed under in winter (as is the wont of most roads at those altitudes in Ladâkh and Kashmîr) and the Dogrâ Mahârâjâ's troops would need to repair it afresh every year around May.

*Main tributaries:* The Kishan Ganga receives the waters of countless little streams. Its more important tributaries are i) the Raman Sind, which joins it from the south of the Tilail valley; ii) the Burzil stream of north-east Guréz; iii) the largish Matsil stream which brings the waters of the northern parts of the valley of Kashmîr; iv) the Kel Dara, which brings the waters of the region south of Chilas and Astor. The Kel river flows in the opposite direction and rushes towards the Kishan Ganga till it collides with the latter at a right angle with such velocity that for a moment it halts the Kishan Ganga and creates a large whirlpool just above the point where they meet; v) the Kankatori or Samgan joins the Kishan Ganga in north Dawar, opposite Sharidi; vi) at Titwal it is joined by the Jagran river, which contains the waters of the Shamshabari and Kazi Nag streams as well as the drainage of Karnah valley.

*Fish:* The river abounds in fish. However, as in the rest of Kashmîr people of the Kishan Ganga valley are not very fond of eating fish. The roe of the fish (i.e. the mass of eggs in its ovarian membrane) is poisonous and causes illness.

### **The rivers and streams of Budgâm district**

Please see the chapter on 'Budgâm' for longer entries on the following rivers and streams:

- Sut Haran
- Nârâ Nâg
- Sukh Nag
- The Ahij branches into several streams such as the Mala Kol, the Lar Kol and the Sona Maen Kol, which irrigate the Beerwah area.
- Pushkar Nag
- Gandhak Nag

The other major streams of the district are the Shaliganga Nallah and the Ferozporâ Nallah.



**Trekking  
and  
Adventure Sports**



1900

1901

1902



## Adventure Sports in Kashmîr

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### Hunting

*Licences and royalties:* You need a licence to hunt. Licences can be obtained in Srinagar from the office of the (Chief) Wildlife Warden, which is conveniently located in the TRC. In Jammû, you need to go to the office of the Wildlife Warden.

In addition, you have to pay a royalty for the trophy. Indians and foreigners pay for licences and royalties according to different fee structures.

There's a flat fee for 'special' game. For the other two categories (big and small game) licences are available for the entire season or for a few weeks. Obviously the season-ticket works out cheaper in the long run.

There are three kinds of licences, depending on the size of the game. And there are restrictions.

The hunting season for big game is throughout the year. However, you can not kill the snow leopard, the musk deer, the brown bear or the hangul (Kashmiri stag), because these are 'protected animals'. It is taboo in Ladâkh to kill marmots, though there is no legal restriction.

Then what do hunters kill? They hunt the barasingha, the black bear, the markhor, the ovis ammon (wild sheep), the ibex, the otter, the weasel, and the fox. Game hunted by them includes snow partridges, the Ram chakor(e) (snow-cock), the monal pheasant (sunal) and other pheasants.



## a) 'Special' Game

Species	Bag limit	Size of horn/ trophy	Shooting Season
Himâlayan Brown Bear (?)	1	150 cm. from nose to tip of tail	15 May-end of Oct.
Surrow	1	20 cm.	16 April-15 Oct
Wild Yak	1	60 cm.	16 April-15 Oct.

## b) Big Game

Species	Bag limit	Size of horn/ trophy	Shooting Season
Barking deer	1	8 cm.	16 Oct.-end of Feb
Bharal	1	60 cm.	16 Apr-15 Oct
Chital	1	60 cm.	15 Dec-end of March
Goral	2	8 cm.	15 Dec-end of March
Himâlayan Black Bear	2	150 cm. from nose to tip of tail	15 May-end of Oct
Himâlayan Thar	1	30 cm.	15 Dec-end of March
Hog Deer	1	30 cm.	16 Oct.-end of Feb
Ibex	1	80 cm.	16 Apr-15 Oct
Neilsar	1	15 cm.	16 Oct-end of Feb
Sambar	1	75 cm.	15 Dec-end of March
Tibetan Antelope	1	22 cm.	16 Apr-15 Oct
Tibetan Wolf	2	80 cm. nose-tail	16 Apr-15 Oct
Wild Pig	2		15 Oct-end of Feb

## c) Small Game

Species	Bag limit	Shooting Season
Chakore, partridges and jungle fowl	10	16 Oct-end of Feb
Dove (Kulmova)	15	16 Oct-31 May
Geese, ducks and teals	20	16 Oct-7 Apr
Hare	5	16 Oct-31 March
Pheasant	5	16 Oct-31 March
Snipe, woodcock and sand grouse	10	1 Sept-16 March
Snow cock (Ram chakore) and snow partridge	6	16 Oct-31 May



The Wildlife Warden can direct the holder of a licence not to shoot 'a particular species or any species in a particular area'. Secondly, the Wildlife Warden can decide not to release the trophy. Most importantly, there are cash penalties for shooting animals of less than the minimum size (of horn/trophy) given above.

*Water birds:* Some ducks breed in Kashmîr, in the wetlands of Hokarsar and in the Haigam lake. Mirgund is the third area "protected" for the hunting of small game. However, hunting is permitted even in these three areas only on Sundays. To hunt on the other days you'll need special permission from the Game Warden, Srinagar.

More varieties visit Kashmîr in winter. Broadly, the shooting season starts in the first week of September and continues till the end of May.

## Golf

Srinagar's 18 hole Kashmîr Golf Club (KGC) is on the Maulana Âzâd Road, right next to the TRC. There is also a 6-hole Palace View course on Gupkar. The International Golf Course (Royal Springs Golf Course), on the Boulevard, opposite the Centaur Hotel, is rated among the best in the world. All three are for members only.

The 19th century KGC is believed to be the second oldest golf course in India.

Gulmarg has a legendary golf course, for long billed as the highest in the world. (Leh's brown, almost grassless, members only, course now has that distinction.) Peter Thompson, the Australian expert, redid the course in the 1980s, bringing it up to internationally acceptable standards: 7,000 yards, par 72. The nine holes of the original course have been retained, partly for reasons of nostalgia. It is still the highest *green* golf course in the world.

Temporary memberships are available at the KGC and at Gulmarg, though, for the while, but not at the Palace View course. If you are staying at an upmarket hotel (as golfers often do) do ask if your hotel is a corporate member. The KGC allows non-members to play on certain conditions.

In 1993, my team and I created what is now a 9-hole course at Sanasar (2,079 metres above the sea; a four-hour drive from Jammû town). It is a public course. Just go there and start playing. Unless asked not to, you can do the same even at Gulmarg, for the present.

There's a nine-hole course in Pahalgâm.

The army has several members-only golf courses, the best ones being at Udhampur, Râjouri, Nagrota and Miran Sâheb (both Jammû) and Leh.



## Fishing

Brown trout can be found in several rivers and lakes of Kashmir and Doda. The biggest recorded catch has been a 14.5 pound trout. There is carp in the Dal Lake.

Kindly do not attempt to catch fish in the Buddhist areas of Leh, Zaskar or Padar (Kishtwâr). To do so would be like slaughtering a cow in the Hindu parts of India. You would be offending local sentiment immeasurably.

Similarly, kindly do not fish in sacred lakes like the Mansar (Udhampur, Jammû) or sacred ponds like the one in Mattan (Ānañtnâg, Kashmir).

*The season:* Kashmir and Doda: By and large the fishing season starts around the beginning of April and lasts till the end of September. If weather/ water conditions are not good, it could start as late as the middle of April and/ or wind up as early as mid-September.

*The trout season:* For snow-fed streams it is from the 15th March to the 30th September. For the spring-fed it is from the 1st April to the 15th October.

*The plains of Jammû:* Jammûites avoid eating fish in months that do not have an 'r' in their names (i.e. May-August). These are the months when fish in the plains are believed to have eggs inside.

*Locations:* Fish is found in Kashmir at almost all altitudes, in spring waters at 5,000', as well as snow-fed waters at 14,000'.

The better known locations for rainbow and brown trout are:

- a) **Rivers in the lower valleys of Kashmir and Jammû**
  - i) Bandiporâ: The Erin/ Madhumati
  - ii) Bhaderwâh: The Neeru River
  - iii) Guréz: The Kishen Ganga
  - iv) Kishtwâr: The Mughal Maidan
  - v) Kokernag: The Bringi River
  - vi) Pahalgâm: River Lidder
  - vii) Tangmarg: The Ferozepur Nallah,

and in cold water streams like the Sindh and Arapat.

From May to July the Kishen Ganga, the Lidder and the Sindh are 'foaming torrents' in the afternoons. The big trout lie near boulders, around which the current sometimes slows down to a gentle pace.

Fishing is good throughout the season in the Ferozepur, Bringi, Kulgam and Erin/ Madhumati nallahs/ rivers.



b) **Springs**

- i) The Gangabal
- ii) The Kokernag spring
- iii) The Kotsu spring
- iv) The Verinag spring

Springs like the Verinag and Isthial are good for fishing all through the season.

c) **High-altitude springs**

- i) The Kishensar
- ii) The Sheerasar
- iii) The Vishansar
- iv) The Nundkol

*Reservations (bookings):* There are trout 'beats' all over the Valley. You can reach most of them by jeep or car. You can book a beat for up to three days at a time, by contacting the Directorate of Fisheries at the TRC, Srinagar. If residential rooms are available in a fisheries' lodge near the beat chosen by you, they too can be booked at the Directorate. The Directorate keeps a six-day week and is open on all working days from 10 am to 2 pm.

Reservations for the forthcoming season start from the 2nd January.

*Restrictions:* Rods, reels and 'spinning' are not allowed. Fly fishing, wet as well as dry, alone is. Live bait is not allowed either. Only two rods are allowed per beat. The 'bag limit' is six fish of more than 25 cm. Fishing licences can neither be transferred to nor shared with other people.

*Purchasing tackles:* There are two shops that have been selling or renting out fishing tackle since the early twentieth century. Both are on or near the Bund (parallel to the Residency/ Sherwani Road). These are M. Gaffara and sons, near Ahdoos' hotel; and Munnawar Shah and son, opposite what used to be the ANZ Grindlays Bank (now J&K Bank.)

*Flies:* The Tourism Department of Jammû and Kashmîr suggests the following flies:

- Alexandria
- Butcher
- Coach man
- March brown
- Muddler
- Nymphs
- Peacock
- Teel and Green
- Watsons and 'Fency'



*Season tickets:* Those with 'season' tickets or licences can fish in all trout waters where fishing is permitted, during the season, as long as that beat has not already been booked for that particular day. Those with 'half-season' licences can fish in any five 'all-week beats' and twelve 'every day' beats where fishing is permitted, again as long as that beat has not already been booked for that particular day.

### Indoor sports

The centrally heated Indoor Stadium at Hazuri Bâgh was India's third biggest when it was inaugurated in the late 1980s. It still is one of the biggest. It can seat 4,050 spectators. The stadium has facilities for archery, badminton, basketball, billiards, boxing, cards, chess, gymnastics, shooting (indoor rifles), table tennis, tennis, and weightlifting.

### Heliskiing

Heliskiing is essentially for skiers with money to spare. It consists of going up to very high slopes in a helicopter and then coming down from there on skis.

Skiers ideally want the snow under their skis to be soft. This has to be snow which is absolutely fresh, on which no one else has skied. Those who go in for any kind of serious exercise always need to know how today's performance compares with that of yesterday. The freshness of the snow has an added advantage. It lets skiers leave clear ski-marks on the snow which they can see when they reach the bottom of the slope.

Besides, it is so much smoother to take turns on fresh snow. 'Fountains' of snow rise up when a skier takes a turn on snow that is soft and powdery. The sense of achievement is even greater if the skier is able to do a new slope every day. Just being on fresh snow is in itself a rare experience for those who have to ski at crowded resorts.

So, where do you get snow that is powdery and deep and, if possible, fresh? At 9,000' or more above the sea. Above 15,000' the availability of oxygen becomes a problem, so the most adventurous skiers aim for slopes between 9,000' and 15,000'.

Gulmarg proper, which begins at 8,709', gets this kind of snow for a few weeks, because it is at the lower end of the band. So those who intend to ski over relatively long periods (5 days or more) need the higher slopes.

The Thajawas glacier just before Sonamarg is considered the best place for heliskiing in all of India, and one of the best in the world.

Naturally there aren't any chair lifts to the higher slopes for those looking for untrodden snow or a new slope every day. In any case, the number of people who go in for this kind of skiing is so small that it isn't worth anyone's while to put up chair cars there.



So helicopters are needed to take them to the top of the slope and deposit them there. They ski down to the bottom, where a helicopter would be waiting to take them back to the top of that, or another, slope.

This is heliskiing, a sport still largely unknown in India though it's been around since the 1980s. Only expert skiers are advised to try it out because of the dangers involved. Lesser skiers risk breaking their legs if they are not used to those steep slopes.

This was one form of tourism in which tourist arrivals to Kashmir did not decline in the 1990-96 period. But then we are talking of very small numbers: barely 150 heliskiers a year.

This kind of tourism is good for the economy: a small number of tourists spending big money. (Most heliskiers go back with at least one expensive carpet each. Only one out of a few hundred backpackers who stay in Rs.100 per bed per day houseboats would do that. And assuming that backpackers and heliskiers are equally callous about the environment, one heliskier means one beer can and one Kodak carton tossed away at a time, while a hundred backpackers mean a hundred cans and a hundred cartons each *ti. e.*)

At least in India this sport is receiving official encouragement. In 1993, Mr. SS Bhalla, then Joint Director (later Director), Tourism, identified for me Kailash Kund (14,500') in Bhaderwâh (Jammû) as a slope with enormous potential. (I was then the Tourism Secretary to the Govt. of Jammû and Kashmir.) Sylvain Saudan, the French expert who works out of Switzerland, liked the idea, because this way he as well as we could utilise for heliskiing the three weeks of January before he shifted to Srinagar.

We got a private helicopter chartered for Mr. Saudan, Mr. Ashraf and me to survey these slopes while there still was soft snow on them. (Mr. Ashraf, an expert skier, was then the Director Tourism, of the state.)

The morning we were to fly to Kailash Kund (Jammû) we were told that Mr. Saudan, being a foreigner, needed special permission, which would take over a week to organise. By then the snow melted and this particular slope still remains untested, even though the infrastructure for tourism in Mantalai-Lâti (which are close to the bottom of the slope) is quite good.

### *Costs and Logistics*

Sylvain Saudan, used to, till 1999, fly batches of 16-17 skiers every week into Srinagar during the period that powder snow was available. Almost all of these skiers would be from Europe, and they would, in 1997, pay the hard currency equivalent of Rs.2-2.5 lakh per head for eight days-seven nights of boarding and lodging (normally at the Centaur Hotel, Srinagar), return fare, a fixed number of helicopter sorties and, of course, skiing. His guests would reach Srinagar one Sunday and leave the next.



Saudan would fly the entire batch to Sonamarg in a large Pawan Hans Mi 17 helicopter every morning. (Sonamarg can be reached quite easily by road. It takes ninety minutes or so by car or jeep from Srinagar if the road is good, and a little longer by bus.) However, from the base camp at Sonamarg he would fly skiers in smaller groups in a Cheetah helicopter to the top of the slope. Mi 17s (pronounced 'mee'-seventeen) can seat as many as 18 passengers at that altitude, whereas Cheetahs carry just three passengers.

One of these three, by regulation, is supposed to be a security official. It's a different thing that heliskiing groups always try to get around this regulation. So at least in theory only two skiers fly up, and thus ski down a slope, at a time.

It's that customised.

The kind of people that Saudan would get were sometimes right out of international 'People' columns.

Why so much about Saudan? For one, he was the only person promoting heliskiing in Kashmir. He got his clients through a small network of travel agents in Europe who handle adventure tourism.

The equipment needed for heliskiing is what would be required for normal skiing: normal skis, a ski suit, snowglasses, a cap, gloves, the shoes and socks that you'd wear for normal skiing, sun tan cream ... The only additional item is the helicopter which, in any case, the tour operator arranges.

### *Season*

White Christmases are mainly to be found in songs and novels these days. Unless you are in Ladâkh or really up north in Europe/ Canada. In Srinagar, as in London and much of Europe, in a normal year it doesn't snow till New Year's. (If then.) And the slopes in the Alps become skiable only slightly later. The position is similar in Jammû and Kashmîr.

Theoretically, all of January, most of February and a bit of March is the time that you can go heliskiing in J&K. However, Saudan would play safe and start the first batch after the 26th January. He would wind up shop towards the end of February.

### *Heliskiing elsewhere*

It were European concerns for ecology (not to mention India's awesome slopes) that brought heliskiers to India in the first place. In Europe slopes that are both above 9,000' and close to a resort are a rarity. The sound of helicopters disturbs the snow and is known to have caused avalanches in the Alps. Therefore, heliskiing has been banned in most European countries.



In the USA there are increasing restrictions on heliskiing. So far no avalanches or other ecological damage have been reported at least in J&K. If any are, even the state will have to have second thoughts. Of late an Australian has been encouraging this sport in Himachal Pradesh.

I am not aware of any Indian actually organising heliskiing though we did get an angry complaint from an eminent Indian mountaineer protesting the monopoly rights given to Saudan for particular slopes. We wrote back saying there were enough slopes to go around for everyone. I did not hear from the mountaineer again while I remained Tourism Secretary, though it would have been very nice if he, too, had stepped into this field.

## Skiing

### *Gulmarg:*

Gulmarg has some of the finest skiing slopes in the world.

In the 1990s, the number of skiers visiting Gulmarg (8,709') did not decline in the same measure as the drop in tourist arrivals in the rest of Kashmir. What happened instead was that a different kind of skiers, mostly students and NCC cadets, took over from the affluent recreational tourist.

Mostly sponsored and subsidised by the Youth Welfare Department of the Govt. of Jammû and Kashmir, these young boys and girls from selected local schools convert three or four huts of the J&K Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC) into 'hostels' and camp there, three or four to a room. And they pay hardly around Rs.350 for a 21-day course, which includes food, accommodation and, of course, skiing.

The same JKTDC huts, as well as several hotels, have now been spruced up to receive older, more upmarket skiers. The skiing itself is quite inexpensive though. While rates are likely to be revised, as of today you can rent a pair of skis for as little as Rs.30 a day from the Ski Hire Shop, with another Rs.30 a session for a privately employed skiing instructor.

What makes Gulmarg such an exciting ski resort is its immensity. If you have visited Gulmarg proper in summer you will recall a huge, green 'bowl' with gentle slopes. From the last week of December to the middle of March the same 'bowl' gets covered with snow and is converted into ten or eleven gentle slopes where even beginners can ski. Over a thousand people are able to, and do, ski there at the same time.

Before 1989, the coming together of so many young, amateur skiers in one place would result in lasting friendships: kind of shipboard romances minus the ships.



The most exciting slopes in the Gulmarg area are the ones that slide down from Al Patthar (roughly 14,000') to the Khilanmarg ridge (roughly 10,000'). This stretch being at a phenomenal height, the snow remains skiable till the end of April. (By way of contrast, at Gulmarg proper the snow often gets 'wet'-and thus slushy—by mid March.) In 2003, it was skiable till mid April.)

Between January and March the Al Patthar-Khilanmarg stretch has soft, powdery snow, which is the ultimate skiing experience because the snow beneath your skis has a cushioned feel and because fountains of snow waft upwards when you take a turn on the curves. The gradient of this slope meets international skiing standards.

The three and a half kilometre stretch between Khilanmarg and Gulmarg is almost a kilometre wide. This means that almost a thousand people can ski on it at a time. This slope is not too difficult for intermediate skiers, though even Olympic-level skiers will find enough challenges in it.

A chair lift will take you half a kilometre up, which translates (because the skiing route is curved) into three quarters of a kilometre of skiing. The ski track that runs along the route of the chair lift is quite well laid out.

A cable car has been installed between Gulmarg and three quarters of the way to Khilanmarg. As a result, one more longish ski slope has become available to those who find the walk up to Khilanmarg too much like work.

The Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering, a Govt. of India organisation, is likely to start conducting once again fairly inexpensive skiing courses at Gulmarg soon. Skating facilities are also available at Gulmarg.

### Rock Climbing

Among accessible places, the hills on the national highway, just before Sonamarg, are the best in all Kashmir.

### Mountain climbing

#### *'Open peaks' in the Kashmir Valley*

	Altitude		
Barmal	5813	76° 20'	33° 36'
Haramukh	5148	76° 01'	33° 48'
Koh-i-Noor	5137		
Koláhoi	5425	76° 01'	33° 49'
Tanak	5992	76° 05'	33° 43'
	metres		



The three peaks most popular among mountain climbers are the Kolahoi, the Haramukh and the Koh-i-Noor. The Koh-i-Noor belongs to a group of three peaks. Two of them were first climbed in 1898. C.G. Bruce scaled the northeastern peak. Karbir, who was Bruce's Gurkha, made it to the highest of the three peaks, the southeastern one (5137m). A British expedition climbed the middle peak, the Kunyirhyān (5098m.) in 1911.

**Trekking**

There is a separate chapter on Trekking.

**River rafting**

The chapter on Rivers gives an idea of which rivers are navigable. A general note of caution: River rafting is a very dehydrating experience. So make sure you drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids.



## Trekking in the Valley of Kashmîr

Everyone who has ever trekked in the mountains, indeed anyone who has ever walked in the countryside, knows that country paths sprout side-roads ever so often. Most of the time your instinct tells you to ignore the side-road. However, sometimes the path splits into two: and both its branches look equally important.

This happens in the Sonamarg-Haramukh trek and the Harnâg-Bâltal and Khem Sar-Kulan sections.

Therefore, you need to keep asking for directions each time that there is a fork in the road. Now, the problem is that the shepherds that you will meet on the route will mostly be Bakerwâls; the cowherds will probably be Gujjars; and most of the 'settled villagers' will be ethnic Kashmîris. Each group speaks a different language at home. I have chosen phrases that all of them are likely to understand.

*Essential phrases/ Asking for directions:*

'hai' is like the 'ha' in the English 'hat', 'ta-raf' rhymes with 'rough'.

	Urdu	Kashmîrî
Where is ...?	... ki-dherr hai?	... kachh?
I want to go to ...	mu-jhey ... jâ-nâ hai.	meh-chhû... gachhun
In which direction is ...?	... kis ter-raf hai?	... ya perr yâñ ya perr? <sup>1</sup>
Place to stay	reh-nay kee jag-gâh	ro-zan kachhu
Water	pâni	trêsh
Food	khânâ	bat

*Some important words:* i) 'Sar' and '-bal': 'Sar' is Hindi-Sanskrit for 'lake'. 'Bal' is a Kashmîrî word that means: 'a place near the banks of a river or lake.' You will come across these two suffixes throughout this chapter, as well as elsewhere in this book.

<sup>1</sup> Literally: 'In this direction [as you point that way] or that?' 'Perr' is pronounced much like the English 'purr,' except that the r's are not silent.



ii) Hapat: 'Hapat' means 'bear.' Places with the prefix 'hapat' generally have a population of bears.

iii) Indian English: A 'roadhead' is the point till which you can drive in a vehicle. A trekker is someone who treks. 'Jeepable' means that you can drive on that rough 'road' in a jeep (or a similar rugged vehicle). 'Motorable' means that in theory a car (or bus) can drive on that road. In practice most 'motorable' roads are only 'jeepable.' A motorable stretch or distance is one on which you can travel in a vehicle. You don't have to walk, except for the exercise.

*Best time to trek:* The best time of the year is generally June to October. This is regardless of whether you are trekking in Kashmîr, Jammû or Ladâkh. It gets uncomfortably cold by mid-October. Rivers/ rivulets/ streams tend to be dangerous when the snow melts, and when there have been heavy rains upstream.

*Crossing rivers:* The snow in the higher mountains melts in June and July (and earlier in the lower mountains). Sometimes there are floods in September. Therefore, before crossing a river in these months in particular, please try to check if it is in spate. Afternoons are always more dangerous because the snow melts the most around noon. By afternoon the level of the water is at its highest point of the day.

*Trekking on snow:* Soft, melting snow can be tricky to walk on. In most mountains it melts by mid-June. In the higher areas snow continues to melt till July.

If the place mentioned is at around 4000 metres, chances are that it will be covered with snow till mid-July.

*Equipment:* The government has set up a small shop in the TRC, Srinagar. It rents out essential equipment, including light tents, sleeping bags, backpacks and boots.

*The 'layout' or structure of these notes:* In the 'routes' given below we first mention the 'day' on which that segment is to be trekked (e.g. Day 3). After that, normally in brackets, we mention how much you will have to walk [from the previous night's camp, which is normally not named this time around] to the place where you will camp that evening. And after that we often go into details about that day's trek, which we had outlined briefly within brackets.

Once you get the hang of this style, you will find it quite simple.

*Important notes of caution:* The Tourism Department of the State did not encourage trekking in any part of the Valley during the 1990s or the first few years of the new century, because of the disturbed conditions. Therefore, before planning a trek, please discuss the route that you intend to take with officers of the department (at the T.R.C, Srinagar). Secondly, even if I



have mentioned a guest-house, tourist bungalow, hotel or other formal accommodation, please cross-check its availability (indeed, its existence) before setting out on the trek. Several government rest houses are meant only for government servants.

The treks mentioned in this chapter are those traditionally favoured by trekkers. However, jeeps and other vehicles now ply on some segments of some treks.

More important, the routes and descriptions given below are only indicative. They are intended to give you a very general idea of how to plan your itinerary. They are not a substitute for detailed maps or trekking guides. Neither this author nor the publisher is responsible for any harm that might be caused to the reader because of any shortcoming in the information given below.

### Ânañtnâg

**Trekking routes:** The district is quite a favourite with trekkers, especially because it is the district where Pahalgâm is located. The more popular trekking routes in the district are:

i) Pahalgâm-Chañdanwârî-Sheshnag-Panchtarni-the Holy Amarnâth cave-Sonamarg (4-5 days): This is the most frequented trek in all Kashmir. This trek is known as the Amarnâth Yâtrâ.

ii) Pahalgâm-Chañdanwârî-Sheshnag-Rang Marg-Humpet-Kanital-Lonvilad-Pânîkhar-Kargil (7-9 days) (details below).

iii) Pahalgâm-the Tulian lake: You can reach reach the Tulian in a few hours, via Bai Saran. You can possibly return to Pahalgâm the same day.

### Ânañtnâg district to Srînagar district

#### Pahalgâm

See also the chapter on 'Pahalgâm' (2,150m.), where several same-day return treks for amateurs have been suggested.

*Pahalgâm / Lidder-Kolâhoi-Yemhar-Sindh-Kulan/Gund*

**Pahalgâm-Kolâhoi Glacier:** (3 days one way; 35.6 km.; Pahalgâm-Kolâhoi-Pahalgâm is 5 days return)

This is an easy trek. The highest that you climb up to is 3,200m. or 3,500m. (depending really on your mood). It can be done between mid-May and mid-October.

*Day 1:* (13 km./ 4 hrs. from Pahalgâm to the sloping meadow of Ârû [2,408m. to 2962m.]) The trek goes through a forest, follows River Lidder and takes around four hours. From certain vantage-points you get a fine view of pine groves, as well as the Tulian peak above Pahalgâm. At Ârû, the Lidder vanishes underground at Gukhumb, to reappear a while later. A



rest house, a hotel, a tourist bungalow and guest-houses are meant to be available. However, people often pitch their own tents. It is possible to do Day 1 by car or jeep. Ârû is a little village overlooking a meadow. A stream that comes down from the Armiun side of the Kolâhoi glacier cuts through the meadow. Ârû is the headquarters of an All-India Institute of Mountaineering.<sup>2</sup>

*Day 2:* (11-13 km./ 4hrs. from Ârû to Liddewatt [3,048m.]) Immediately after you leave Ârû you will have to climb roughly 500'. However, after that the track is either flat or has a very gentle incline. Most of it is through a forest. The track will often be close to the Lidder. You will have to cross the stream that comes down from the Kolâhoi glacier before you reach the Liddewatt glacier. Liddewatt is a meadow amidst dense forests. There's a river on both sides. Therefore, water is plentiful. Here, too, you can camp in the open or in a rest house. The Tourism Department has an 'alpine' (self-catering) hut. (You can trek from Liddewatt to several other places, many of them in the Sindh valley.)

*Day 3:* (To the base of the Kolâhoi and back to Liddewatt, 8-10 hours return.) The base of the Kolâhoi Glacier is at 3,354m. and is an easy 11-13 km./ 5 hour trek from Liddewatt. Today you will mostly trek along the Lidder river. By and large it will be an easy walk. You will first go through a pine forest. After a little more than two hours you will reach Satlanjan, a large open space. Here you will need to cross several little streams by foot-bridges. You will pass some shepherds' huts. Half an hour later you will be able to see the Kolâhoi Peak (5425m. to 5,734 m.) standing alone majestically. It is sometimes called the 'Matterhorn of Kashmir'. To get a good look at the peak you will need to go along boulders and scree to the snout of the glacier (3,500m.) You will have to return to Liddewatt for the night. The return trek is faster. Thus you would have trekked 26 km. or eight to ten hours today.

*The return trek:* Most people start moving back towards Pahalgâm on the fourth day. You can do that. Or you could proceed to Kulan/ Gund and thence to Srinagar or Sonamarg as indicated in *Day 7* of the trek below. Or you could go to the fabled TârSar (see the details below) and return to Pahalgâm on the fifth day.

**Pahalgâm-Kolâhoi Glacier-Kulan/ Gund-Sonamarg/ Srinagar :** (7 days, or less, in all): *Day 1:* (Under four hours to Ârû) From Pahalgâm you will walk on a trekking trail that runs along the main road almost throughout the day; and the next few days as well. It follows the west fork of the Lidder river for much of the way. The campsites at Ârû are one to two kilometres above the main meadow.

<sup>2</sup> During the 1990s and the early 2000s it functioned from Batote in Jammû.



*Day 2:* (Four hours to Lidderwatt) The first three km. are uphill through a pine forest. You will mostly trek along the Lidder and will cross a bridge over it when you get to Lidderwatt. Once there, you can camp in the Lidder valley, some two kilometres ahead, or in the Government Rest House. You might like to consider making this Rest House your base camp. As you will see, you might want to make day trips (or two-day trips) out of Lidderwatt and return to the Rest House for the night.

*Day 3:* (Between two and three hours to Satlanjan, depending on where you camp.) The track continues to run along the Lidder. Satlanjan has a pasture and a number of Gujjar (nomadic cowherd) families. The best campsites are in the valley above Satlanjan, on the route that leads to Sona Sar and Handil Sar. You can pitch your tent for the night there.

*Day 4:* (Eight to ten hours to the Kolāhoi base and back to Lidderwatt) Leave the camp very early: because the weather at the peak gets bad well before noon. Today you will climb up to the base of the Kolāhoi: first through green pastures and then past rocks.

From the base you can: a) go up to the glacier (5425 m. to 5,734 m.), or b) climb up the ridge opposite the Kolāhoi, or c) ford the Lidder and then climb, for an hour and a half, to the Dod Sar. You can see the Kolāhoi in any one of these three ways. You can even combine days 3 and 4. Either way, you need to camp at Lidderwatt tonight. (In all, the Kolāhoi glacier is 36 km from Pahalgām.)

*Day 5:* (Three hours to Sekiwas, 3,435m) The first half-kilometre is a steep climb, behind the Govt. Rest House. After you have climbed the ridge, the path will go through pastures and to and fro across little streams.

*Day 6:* (Six hours/ 12 km. to the Khem Sar Lake, 3,435m.) Three routes lead out of Sekiwas: a) to the Sonamous Pass (3,960 m.) on the left; b) to a 4,200 m. pass in the middle; and c) the path on the right to the Yemhar Pass. Let us take the gully on the right. It will take almost three hours up a gentle slope to climb to the Yemhar Pass (variously estimated at 4,035, 4,115 and 4,350 m.). However, the downhill trek after that can be tricky. You can camp by the lake.

*Day 7:* (Four hours to Kulan or Gund, the roadheads. The exact distance to Kulan is 14.4 km.) You will find two tracks branching out from near the lake, both towards the Sindh valley. The bigger one goes down to Kulan (2,085m.) and the smaller one to Gund. The latter goes through forests of pine and birch. You can take either path. Both Kulan and Gund are roadheads. (A roadhead is the point up to which you can drive in an automobile. After that the road ends and the trek begins. In this case Kulan and Gund are the places where the trek ends and the jeep road begins.)

There are buses from Gund to Sonamarg and Srinagar. There is also a road from Kulan to Sonamarg.



*Detours and add-ons:* a-i) From Ârû: North of Ârû village are snow gullies. It takes three to four hours to reach them, and almost as long to get back.

a-ii) Alternatively, you can trek from Ârû to the various picturesque *dêrâs* (camps) of the nomadic Gujjar tribe.

b-i) From Lidderwatt: To get to the Târ Sar Lake, you will first need to cross the stream above Sekiwas. The stream can be quite dangerous when in spate. (The snow melts in June and July.) After that there is a gradual ascent to the Târ Sar. (In all, the Târ Sar Lake is 35 km from Pahalgâm.) The 10-13 km. trek from Lidderwatt to Târ Sar takes between 2.5 and 3.5 hours, and a little less on the way back. (See detailed trek below.)

b-ii) You need not return from the Târ Sar to Lidderwatt. There is a ridge beyond the lake. You can climb it till you get to a pass. The descent from the pass will take you to Srinagar's Dachigam Sanctuary. From there you can take a bus to the main city.

b-iii) You can proceed from the Târ Sar to Sekiwas, three kilometres away, and camp there.

c) From Sekiwas you can go to Sumbal (in the Sindh valley) in two days. On the first day you will climb up to the Sonamous Pass (3,960m.) and camp in Sonamous for the night. (Sonamous rhymes with 'puss'.) The next day you will go down through forests till you reach Sumbal. From there you can take a bus to Srinagar or Sonamarg.

**Lidderwatt-Târ Sar-Pahalgâm:** This is an easy trek. The highest that you will climb up to is 3,795m. It can be done between mid-May and mid-October.

*Day 1:* (10-12 km. to the Târ Sar. It's Day 4 actually, because you can't begin your trek at Lidderwatt. For the first 3 days, please see the 'Pahalgâm-Kolâhoi Glacier' trek above.) You will first trek along the stream to the east of Lidderwatt. You will pass through a forest. Then you will need to go over boulders to reach the Târ Sar lake (3,735 to 3,795m.), which is 12 km. (four hours or less) from Lidderwatt. You will pass several Bakerwâl huts on the way. You can return to Lidderwatt for the night. The return trip would have taken you around 8 hours.

*Or:* From Târ Sar you can proceed to the Mâr Sar lake. You will have to first climb up a ridge and then descend to the Mâr Sar. In case you choose this option, you will have to camp at Mâr Sar. You might not be able to return to Lidderwatt the same day.

*Day 2:* (Day 5, really) Assuming that you had returned to Lidderwatt for the night, you can now go straight from Lidderwatt to Pahalgâm in 5 hours. (Which raises the question: couldn't you have come from Pahalgâm straight to Lidderwatt, skipping Ârû? Yes, you could have. And you might have



saved a day. It's just that uphill it would have been strenuous, unless you were on a pony, or unless you had driven up to Ârû.)

*Alternative:* You can descend from the Târ Sar to Sotar in 2 days, or even in one strenuous 27 kilometre day, and take a bus from Sotar or Trâl to Srinagar. (See 'Pulwâmâ' in this chapter.)

**Pahalgâm-Ârû-Bâltal-Sonamarg:** (4 or 5 days) Every year around 1,50,000 pilgrims trek from Pahalgâm to the Sî Amarnâth jî cave. Many of them proceed from the Holy Cave to Sonamarg, instead of returning to Pahalgâm. The whole trek takes four or five days. Here is an alternate, slightly less frequented, direct route to Sonamarg.

*Day 1:* It will take less than four hours to get to Ârû, travelling along the main road and, often, along the river. *Day 2)* (Around four hours to Nafran.): After Ârû it will be uphill for a while. You will travel mostly above the Nafran rivulet. You can camp near the Nafran meadow. *Day 3)* (Four hours to Harnâg.): It will be a stiff climb to the Harbhagwân Pass (4,200 m.). After that it is a short way downhill to the Harnâg Lake. A good place to camp is the edge of the lake furthest from the pass and closest to Bâltal. *Day 4)* (Four hours to Bâltal.): From here it will mostly be downhill to Bâltal. The track from Sî Amarnâth jî joins the Harnâg valley just before Bâltal. You can camp at Bâltal, or hitch a ride to Sonamarg. Bâltal is the roadhead. In season there are plenty of trucks and jeeps going up and down between here and Rañgâ (on the Highway). *Day 5):* You can walk to Sonamarg (4 hours) in case you didn't get a lift, or because you want the exercise.

*Detour:* From Harnâg you can climb up the nearby ridges (three to four hours each way) to see the Kolâhoi mountains. Return to Harnâg for the night.

**To Kounsar Nâg** (The Nag itself is in 'Ânañtnâg.' This trek wends its way through the Pulwâmâ and Ânañtnâg districts.)

**Aharbal-Kounsar Nâg:** (1/2/3/4 days, return: depending on how much you want to walk and how much you want to do in a vehicle.) You can drive right up to the Aharbal waterfalls (see 'Pulwâmâ' district). Or you could break journey at Shopiân and then resume the drive to Aharbal. You can even drive to the tiny Kongawattan valley.

*Day 1:* (13 km. from Aharbal to Kongawattan.) A pleasant trek through the woods, often along a river. *Day 2:* (16 km. to the Kounsar Nâg. Night halt near the lake, or at Mâhinâg.) The first stretch would be along the river, on even land, through Mâhinâg village. Some time later you will need to cross the river and then climb up around a thousand feet to a pass. The path beyond the pass descends to the lake. You can camp near the lake in case you wish to stay on and climb the neighbouring peaks. Or you can begin your return journey the same day. In that case you can camp at Mâhinâg



if you are too tired to make it to Kongawattan. If you aren't and if you have a vehicle waiting for you at Kongawattan, you might even be able to Srinagar-Kounsar Nâg-Srinagar (i.e. return) in one long day.

Incidentally, kong means saffron. Wattan is pronounced with hard t's and means 'gathering.' (Watan with one soft 't' means 'nation.') Thus kongawattan means 'the gathering of saffron.' Don't go by the name. Saffron is not known to have been grown or gathered there.

*Add-ons: To Réâsî (Jammû):* It is possible to go from the lake to Réâsî, in Jammû. Here is a rough description of two possible routes: i) Cross the lake. Then cross the snowfield below the Brahma-Shakti peak. Go up to, and then cross, the pass. The route leads to Réâsî. ii) Go to the northern end of the lake. Three kilometres from here, towards the south-west, is another pass that opens, on the other side, into Jammû province.

**Avil-Kounsar Nâg:** (3-5 days, return.) Drive or take a bus, 61 km., from Srinagar to Kulgâm. *Day 1:* (16 km. from Kulgâm to Avil.) Avil is on the right bank of River Veshau/ Vishav. *Day 2:* (16 km. to Kongawattan.) You will first climb up a very stiff slope. This will be followed by a descent to Chittâ Pâni (lit. 'the white-water'). Once again the track will go uphill, only to descend to Kongawattan. *Day 3:* (As on 'Day 2' of the 'Aharbal-Kounsar Nâg' trek. You can return the way you came, proceed to Réâsî or come back as in the 'Aharbal-Kounsar Nâg' trek.)

### Bârâmullâ

*Pir Pañjâl: treks across:* These have been covered in the volume on 'Jammû.'

*Tilail:* The simplest way to get there on foot is to trek from Wâñgat (Srinagar district) through Gañgabal. (See 'Srinagar' district in this chapter. In particular see *Day 2* of the 'Sonamarg-Vishen Sar-Kishan Sar-Gañgabal-Haramukh-Wâñgat' trek)

There are two trekking routes from Sonamarg, too. i) The Nichanai (Nikka Nai) route, past the Kishan Sar and Vishen Sar lakes. (In this chapter, see also the section 'To Gañgabal and neighbouring lakes and peaks' and within it the 'Sonamarg-Vishen Sar-Kishan Sar-Gañgabal-Haramukh-Wâñgat' trek.) ii) The Bara Nai route, along the Raman stream.

Tilail can also be reached from Skardu (POK), the Shingo river and the Deosai plains by climbing over the Grati Nar.

### Treks out of Gulmarg:

*Alpather Lake:* (pron. ull per-therr) (13 km./ 4½ hours each way from Gulmarg.) This icy lake remains frozen till mid-June. A pony-track, not very steep, leads to it. Ice is often found floating on the lake, which is at the feet of the Alpather peak. The peak generally has snow throughout the year. It is behind the ridge that separates the lake and the peak from Khilanmarg. (Suggested route: Gulmarg-Khilanmarg-Apharwat-Alpather.)



*Apharwat*: (c.14,000') 2 hours from Khilanmarg. There is a pretty blue lake at the top.

*Bābā Rēshī*, the shrine of: (See the main entry in the chapter on 'Bārāmullā.') From Gulmarg you can drive down 5 km. (less if you walk) through a dense forest to this famous shrine. Popular with Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs alike.

*Banibālī Nāg*: (2,926m.) five hours each way from Gulmarg. This is a small lake above the Ferozepur Nallah. It has been formed by landslides.

*Ferozpur valley*: This is a roughly 1,200' descent from Gulmarg towards the south. The trek from Gulmarg to the beginning of the valley takes around 75 minutes along a gentle gradient and a picturesque path. It is a very pretty valley where people camp, picnic and fish. The Ferozpur nallah (stream) runs through the valley.

There are many springs in the Apharwat mountain. Their waters come down to the Ferozpur valley throughout the year, but more so in May and June when snow starts melting. The waters of these streams run under fields of snow and carve pretty snow-caves in the process. The Ferozpur nallah is formed when the waters of these streams merge.

There is a path to the west. It leads to the Ferozpur passes and then Poonch (Jammū).

*Gagrimarg*: This is a green valley above Alpather. There are small lakes nearby. The trek between the two takes about two hours.

*Kantar Nāg*: (4,039m.) This is a little mountain-top lake. The whole trip from Gulmarg and back can take three days.

*Khilanmarg*: 4 km./ 45-60 minutes each way. This is an enjoyable uphill journey from Gulmarg to a meadow strewn with flowers. From here you get a panoramic view of the Wular and other lakes, as well as the surrounding peaks. (Trekkking route: same as for Alpather above.) Ponies for the climb are available at Gulmarg.

*Lienmarg*: The trek to this grassy meadow goes through pine forests and many glades. It is a popular camping ground.

*Ningal Nallah*: Ten kilometres. from Gulmarg. This is a stream that originates near Apharwat and Alpather. Its waters are a mixture of pure spring water and melted snow. It winds its way through forests of pine.

*Poonch-Gulmarg*: This trek takes several days and has been discussed in the volume on 'Jammū.'

*Tos(h)a Maidān*: The route is: Gulmarg-Danwas-Tejjan-Tos(h)a Maidān



**Budgām**

(See also the chapter on 'Budgām' district.)

Yusmarg has traditionally been a major resort, 40 km. south of Srinagar. Several treks begin there.

**Yusmarg-Sunset Peak-Yusmarg:** (5 days.) *Day 1:* (16 km. from Yusmarg to Durgā-Lotan.) The track is undulating and passes through woods. It leads to a tiny valley. *Day 2:* (13 km. to Danzab; or 18 km. to the foot of the glacier.) The track goes up a gentle incline, again through forests. Bakaya says, 'Aconites, a poisonous herb, is found in abundance here.' You can camp on the Danzab meadow or, further south, at the bottom of the glacier. *Day 3:* (To Sunset Peak, 15,567', and back to the camp.) You would first have to cross the Romus. The track along the right bank of this stream leads to the foot of the glacier. This is one of Kashmir's safer glaciers to climb on. You need to go up and over the glacier to get to the peak. Bakaya says of the 'main rocky peak' that it 'looks like a giant, crouching lion.' From the peak there's a grand view of the plains in the south. Regardless of whether you had camped at Danzab or at the foot of the glacier the previous night, it would be a good idea to return to Danzab for the night. *Day 4:* (Return from Danzab/ the foothill to Durgā-Lotan, 13 or 18 km.) *Day 5:* (16 km. to Yusmarg)

*Alternative:* On Day 4 you need not return to Yusmarg. Instead you can go 10 km. south west from Danzab to Chittā Patthar.

**Yusmarg-Chittā Patthar-Tatakuti Peak-Yusmarg:** (5 days) *Day 1:* (5-6 hours from Yusmarg to Frasnāg.) Frasnāg is a spring known for its icy waters. It is 6 km. to the west of Durgā-Lotan. *Day 2:* (10 km. to Chittā Patthar.) In the second kilometre there will be a bridge over the Dood Gaṅgā. Cross over to the left bank of the river. Now follow the river till the valley comes to an end. You can camp at Navuk, near the small gorge where the river emerges. *Day 3:* (To the Tatakuti Peak, 15,560' and back to Chittā Patthar.) Travel south along the same path as yesterday, still along the river's left bank. After a few kilometres and after crossing a low saddle, the path will turn west. After that you will climb through rocks and loose stones, to reach the Chhoti Gali pass (14,100'). (This pass leads to Behram Gallā in Jammū: see 'Shopiāñ-Thannā Mandi' in this chapter. Therefore, do not cross the Chhoti Gali pass by mistake.) It is a stiff ascent to the base of the Peak and sharper still to the Peak itself. Return the way you had come. Bakaya says, 'There are many mountain tarns in this Dood Gaṅgā valley which are worth a visit. There are glaciers, too, with steep passes into the Jammū Province.' *Day 4:* (Return to Frasnāg.) *Day 5:* (Return to Yusmarg.)

*Alternative:* Instead of returning from Frasnāg to Yusmarg, you could go on to Gulmarg. (See the 'Yusmarg-Toshā Maidān-Gulmarg' trek.)



**Yusmarg-Tosh   Maid  n-Gulmarg:** *Day 1:* (5-6 hours to Frasn  g.) *Day 2:* (16 km. to Dorein.) Cross the bridge over the Dood Ga  g  . Climb up through a forest to Miskan. Continue climbing up a very long moor and cross a river to reach Diskal (c.11,000'). After that there is a slight descent to Dorein (c.9,500'), which has some Bakerw  l huts. *Day 3:* (10 hours to Bandi.) Climb up a gentle slope to Hakakhal. You will next pass the L  l Sh  h   lam ridge before reaching the grassy Tosh   Maid  n valley (10,500'). Climb from the Maid  n, up a gradual slope, to the Kr  ln  g pass (12,002'). From there it is downhill to Bandi (11,200'), where the Bakerw  ls camp.

*Tosh   Maid  n* (also Tosh Maid  n) is a large, mostly plain, sometimes undulating, pasture east of the Pir Pa  j  l range. Hills rise gently on all sides of the green plain. The pass of the same name connects the Valley with Poonch in Jamm   province. (See also the entry on 'Tosh Maid  n' in the chapter on 'Badgam' district.)

*Day 4:* (6 hours to Gulmarg.) When you go downhill from Bandi you will meet the track that goes from the Ferozepur Nallah (Kashm  r) to Poonch (Jamm  ). Take this track. It goes down a sharp slope, through a forest, to Gulmarg.

### **Kupw  r  **

#### ***The Lol  b area:***

Sopore to Dorsa: *Stage 1:* Sopore. *Stage 2:* 20 km. to Chogal. *Stage 3:* 5 km. to Ha  ndw  r  . *Stage 4:* 23 km. to Drugmull  . *Stage 5:* 13 km. to Kambr  l. *Stage 6:* 16 km. to Dorsa/ Dorsu.

B  r  mull   to Dorsa: *Stage 1:* B  r  mull  . *Stage 2:* 12 km. to Pantsal. *Stage 3:* 12 km. to Kitardaji. *Stage 4:* 19 km. to Khaipur. *Stage 5:* 16 km. to Patal N  g. *Stage 6:* 13 km. to Kambr  l. *Stage 7:* 16 km. to Dorsa.

Alsu to Dorsa: *Stage 1:* Alsu. *Stage 2:* 11 km. to Nagmarg. *Stage 3:* 16 km. to Dorsa.

### **Pulw  m  **

#### **Kungwattan-Aharbal**

#### **T  r Sar-Tr  l:**

The T  r Sar is a high altitude lake. The 'Lidderwat-T  r Sar-Pahalg  m' and 'Pahalg  m-Kol  hoi Glacier-Kulan/ Gund-Sonamarg/ Srinagar' treks in this chapter show how to reach the T  r Sar. The descent from the lake can be thus: *Day 1:* (8 km. to N  g Baran.) The gradient is gentle and the slopes are green. *Day 2:* (19 km. to Sotar.) The first stretch is an uphill climb, followed by a gentle 4,000' descent. Bakaya recommends a visit to the Narasthan ruins. Tr  l is en route. (See the chapter on 'Pulw  m  ' district for Narasthan and Tr  l.)



**Srinagar***Treks in the suburbs of the city***Mount Mahadev:** (1 or 2 or 3 days)

This is an easy trek. Drive (by bus/ taxi) to Bren, which is just behind the Nishat garden. *Day 1:* (Around 5 hours to Lidwas.) As you go uphill you will find a stream coming down towards you. You will have to cross it quite often. The stretch between Bobjan and Lidwas is steep. Lidwas is a small valley. The stream that you've been crossing originates here. *Day 2:* (Night halt: Srinagar) You can go up to the Mahadev peak (c.13,000') and return to Lidwas in four or five hours. The first stretch uphill might be over a snowfield, followed by rocky terrain. The Hindus consider the peak holy because of its association with Lord Shiv (Mahadev). You can go down to Srinagar on 'Day 2' itself, or relax at Lidwas that night and return the next day.

Instead of returning to Bren, most people prefer to descend to the Shalimar or Harwan gardens of Srinagar. City buses serve both places.

Some people do the entire trek in 15 hours in a single day: Srinagar to the peak and back.

**Dara-Hain:**

(Same-day return, or in 2 leisurely days. An easy trek.) Drive down the Boulevard, past the Mughal Gardens. The road bifurcates just after the Harwan garden and reservoir. The right fork goes to Dachigam. The one on the left goes to the picturesque Dara village, which is four kilometres or so ahead. From here a trail winds its way up to the top of the Hain mountain. After that it goes down, through the woods on the other side, to Hain village. There is a Forest Hut close to Hain village.

*To Gañgabal and neighbouring lakes and peaks***Sonamarg-Vishen Sar-Kishan Sar-Gañgabal-Haramukh-Wāngat:** (6 days)

This trek is considered 'moderate to difficult'. The highest point will be at 4,081m. The best period is mid-June to mid-October. It takes you past a series of high-altitude lakes.

Please do not expect to obtain any supplies or provisions on this route. Sonamarg (2,740m.) is on the highway between Srinagar and Leh. You can reach Sonamarg by bus or taxi.

Distances given in terms of hours do not jell with those in kilometres. That's because stretches along the route are quite difficult, especially in the Gañgabal-Trisangam-Atawat alternative.

*Day 1:* (6 hours/ 13 km. to Nichinai, also spelt Nichanni and Nichanai) The trail begins from near the steel bridge at Shitkari. The bridge is on the



Thâjawâs stream on the highway. You need to turn right (north west) from the road and start walking to Lashpatri. After less than a kilometre you will reach a meadow at Shok Dharan (or Shok Dari). The dZoji La will now be behind you. You will be able to see the Sonamarg valley and the Thâjawâs glacier. You will then go through a steep birch forest and over rocks before the forest path descends to the Nichanai nallah (stream). Go upstream along the nallah to the base of the Nichanai pass. You will find a nice camping ground there. Water is available. Brown bears are found in this area.

Day 2: (13 km./ 6-7 hrs. from Nichanai to Vishen Sar, also spelt Vis(h)nu Sar.) Trek upstream. If the snow-bridge hasn't melted you might have to go over it. (Caution: Snow bridges can be very dangerous when they are melting.) Cross the Nichanai nallah. It will take almost two and a half hours of gradual climbing from the right, followed by a steep ascent that is equally long. This will take you to the top of the snow-covered Nichanai Bar Pass (4,080m). On the left of the pass are many jagged peaks. A stream flows down from the pass to the other side. Follow it downhill, along its right bank. You will come to a flat stretch. You should then cross the stream to get to the Vishen Sar (3,677m.) Its twin, the Kishan Sar, is a kilometre away, to the north-west, and a stiff 150m. higher. The Kishan Sar is dwarfed by the tall Mount-Vishnû. The lakes are full of trout, but you need a licence to fish. (Get one in advance from the Directorate of Fisheries, TRC, Srinagar). There's a good camping ground and lots of good water.

The *Vishen Sar* (named after the Hindu God Vishnû) is a pear-shaped lake, roughly 750 metres long and 500 metres wide. It is said to be quite deep. Its waters come from a glacier in its south. The overflow from the Kishan Sar lake (named after Lord Krishna) enters the Vishen Sar from the west. Despite that the lakes have different colours: blue and green. The waters of the Vishen Sar go on to form the Raman, a tributary of the Kishan Gaṅgâ. There is a small valley and tall mountains around the lake.

The lake is situated in the mountains between the Sind valley and Tilail. Its own valley is small, flat and filled with flowers. There is a bridle path that connects the two: it starts from Sonamarg in the Sind valley and goes right up to Tilail. This path goes past the Vishen Sar.

Day 3: (15 km./ 7 hrs. to the Gâd Sar, 3,550-3,700m.) Climb up a steep slope to the Kishan Sar. From the right of the Kishan Sar you will rapidly climb up around 300m. (a thousand feet) to a 4,191m. pass. It will be a short but difficult climb. Mount Vishnû will be on your left. A river goes down from the pass to the other side. Descend along it. It's a steep descent over snow. On the left you will see a small, deep blue lake with pieces of ice floating on it. The Bakerwâls know it as the Yem Sar, or the lake of



death. (Lord Yem or Yam<sup>3</sup> is the Hindu deity of death.) After a while the valley will grow into a wide plain. You will find another lake at the bottom of a mountain. This is the Gâd or Gâda Sar. Many different kinds of plants and herbs grow here. Medicinal herbs that grow in this area include kuth, argat and pivak. The shepherds are paid Rs.35 for every kilogram of herbs that they collect (2001 prices). These fetch twice that amount at Kangan, which is the nearest village on the national highway. There's fish in the stream and brown bears in the vicinity. The camping ground is about a kilometre before the mouth of the gorge at the base of the Kasturgand mountain. (From there you can reach Guréz in three or four days.)

*Day 4:* (6 hrs. to Sat Sar/ Satsaran, 3,695m.) There are two routes to Sat Sar, also called Satsaran. a) Climb sharply up a winding path to the snow-covered Kasturgang mountain. This will lead to the pass right above the Gâd Sar. The path might be hard to find for the first kilometre because plants would have grown on it. The descent from the pass to the Sat Sar is equally steep. b) Follow the small stream and go around the mountain. The stream will vanish for almost a kilometre into the deep Rasabal cave. It reappears at the foot of a gorge.

The Kasturgang (called Kasturgand by some) is strewn with flowers. The musk (*kastoor*) deer lives here. The Mengandub peak is above this pass.

The last stretch to Sat Sar is through boulders. Sat Sar is made up of a cascade of seven lakes. There is a good camping ground nearby.

*Day 5:* (5 hrs. to Gañgabal) As you go down, along the stream, it would be advisable to stay to the right of the rocks. There is a sharp descent of a kilometre in the beginning. Thereafter, you will start climbing up the steep, winding and often snow-covered path that goes up the Zaji mountain to the Zajibal Gali (pass) (4,146m.). (Zaji is sometimes spelt Zoji. I have spelt it Zaji to avoid confusion with the dZoji La.) You will get a panoramic view of the Haramukh and other peaks from the pass. From there it will be downhill all the way, though stiffly and tiringly so, to the Gañgabal lake (3,570m.). A stream links Gañgabal with the nearby Nund Kol lake, which is at a lower elevation. There is trout in both lakes. Close at hand, near the Gañgabal, is a picturesque camping site. An excellent camping site also exists on the left bank of the Nund Kol (3,508m). In fact, most people prefer to camp at the Nund Kol.

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting how the Hindu concept of Yam, the angel of death, comes up so frequently among the Muslims of Kashmir. Rural folk see the people of Srinagar City as the Yamrâz: angels of death, who produce no food themselves and live off food grown in the villages. Traditional Kashmiri Muslim mothers warn their children to stay away from an animal that they call the Yam, out of fear that the animal will eat up their children.



**Lake Ga  gab  l:** (Pron.: gung+ bull, which rhymes with 'hung' and 'dull.' The 'a' between them is more or less silent.) This lake is sacred to the Hindus. They go on a pilgrimage to Ga  gab  l on the 8<sup>th</sup> of Bh  dra (Bhadon), or roughly the 20<sup>th</sup> August, every year. (See 'Srinagar' district for details.)

Most shepherds know the lake as the Haramukh Sar.

Many trekkers spend Day 6 at the Ga  gab  l, fishing. In that case please add a day to the length of the trek. And please obtain in advance the necessary permissions from the Fisheries office in the TRC, Srinagar.

**Day 6:** (16-19 km./ 6 hrs. to N  r   N  g) You will first pass the Nund Kol and then go downhill along the stream. There will be a brief climb, followed by a descent, before you reach Trunkhol. After that you will descend through a forest, on a path that slopes down sharply. You will find pre-historic temple ruins at N  r   N  g (see 'Srinagar' district). The jeepable road begins here. You might be able to get a lift. Or simply walk along the mostly even road to W   gat. If you are in time you might be able to catch a bus to Srinagar, which is an hour and a half's drive (50 km.) away.

**Alternatives:** You can go directly from i) Sonamarg to the Kishan Sar; or ii) W   gat to the Ga  gab  l. Or, you could linger on at Ga  gab  l and go to the nearby lakes. (See the entries on Ga  gab  l and Nund Kol in the chapter on 'Srinagar' district.)

**The Hindu pilgrims' route to Ga  gab  l: Ganderbal/ Prang-Ga  gab  l-N  r   N  g(4 days)**

**Day 1:** Srinagar-Ganderbal-Prang (or Kangan) by bus or other vehicle. From there leave very early and walk to Ramaradhan, where Parshu Ram, the saint, would meditate. Climb up the Barat mountain. It is steep at times. Night halt on the open Mahalesh meadow(c.9,000') where juniper can be found. Warning: Dangerous snow-storms are known to have taken place here, killing thousands of pilgrims. **Day 2:** A comfortable 10 km. to the Brahma Sar. Pilgrims perform *shr  dh* (death anniversary) rites here. **Day 3:** Either i) a comfortable 10 km. to Ga  gab  l, over gently sloping meadows; or ii) 16 km. to Ga  gab  l through the Hamsdar Pass, the Kola Sar valley and Nundkol. The latter route is difficult but considered more sacred. **Day 4:** 19 km. to N  r   N  g. Entirely downhill, mostly through fir forests. En route you will pass Trunkhol, Hapatgand and Butsher (Buteshwar). It's rather steep downhill after Butsher. (If there's a vehicle waiting for you at N  r   N  g, you can reach Srinagar in two hours. Or walk to W   gat or the highway and look for a bus.)

**The shortest route: N  r   N  g-Ga  gab  l** (Two or three-day return) Drive from Srinagar to W   gat. If you have your own vehicle, you can drive all the way to N  r   N  g. **Day 1:** Climb three steep kilometres, through forests, up to Butsher. This is followed by six more gradual kilometres



uphill (the last stretch being stiff). Then go down for three kilometres to the forests of Trunkhol. If you are planning a 3-day trip then spend the night at Trunkhol and go over to the nearby Kola Sar and Brahma Sar lakes, via the Hamsdar pass, the next day. Or, if you want to do the trip in just two days, carry on to the Gañgabal on Day 1 itself and return to Trunkhol for the night. *Day 2:* Return to Nârâ Nâg the way that you came.

*Other routes:* a) **Via Sarabal-Tsurlat-Lool Gul** (5 days, each way). Start from Srinagar. The subsequent stages are: 50 km. [from Srinagar] to Nadihal. 24 km. to Koodor. 13 km. to the Sarabal meadows. 10 km. to the base of the Tsurlat Pass (12,500'). 7-8 hours, via the Lool Gul pass (13,500'), to Gañgabal. (From Sarabal you can climb up to the Haramukh Peaks.)

b) The stretch from the Gañgabal to Srinagar, via Atawat and Bâñdîpur can also be done in 4 days (one way) through the following difficult and tiring route:

*Stage 1:* (Loolgul Nâg to Trisangam is around thirteen difficult and slow kilometres.) Leave Gañgabal. Climb up from the head of the lake to Lool Gul Nâg and proceed to the Erin nallah. From the Lool Gul pass you will see a valley. Leave the Kola Sar, which will be on your left, and go down the Trisangam nallah into the valley. It is a steep descent. You have to cross a torrent. Get to the right of the stream. You can camp at c.11,000' where a nallah joins the Trisangam. Fuel is plentiful.

*Stage 2:* (19-20 km. or 12 hours to Atawat) After you have crossed the bridge at Trisangam, it will be sharp 7-8 km. climb to the Magan meadow, which is at around 12,000'. Around a kilometre and a half after Magan, a very difficult, very steep and risk-prone descent begins to a village. The descent after the village is not as bad, but is still quite difficult. Then you need to ford two streams. Camp where you can.

*Stage 3:* (15 km. to Bâñdîpur) The worst will be over after the first 6 km. that you do today. A kilometre later you will enter a bigger valley and will be able to see the Wular lake. The road from Guréz will join you around here. You might get a lift on the last, motorable, stretch of the road.

*Stage 4:* There are buses from Bâñdîpur to Srinagar.

c) **To Gañgabal, via Posh Pathri:** (5 days; recommended season: July-September) Drive 80 km. from Srinagar to Erin, via Bâñdîpur. This trek is only meant for advanced trekkers. *Day 1:* (11 km. from Erin to Posh Pathri, 2,440m.) Cross the Erin river near the rest house. The initial 4 km. stretch is uphill and the track is good. You will pass through Kundara village before Posh Pathri. *Day 2:* (11 km. to Sarabal.) The initial 8.5 km. ascent to Mimimarg is up a steep gradient. The Shir sar lake is above Sarabal. *Day 3:* (10 km. to the Kund Sar, 3,800m.) Take the trail to the left of the Gujjar huts. It is almost entirely uphill to the Kund Sar lake: the first 2.5 km. being



difficult. *Day 4:* (11 km. to the Gaṅgabal, 3,570m.) The track first goes over a glacier. This is followed by a 3 km. descent. A considerable while later the track turns left and goes uphill to the top of the ridge. After that you go downhill to the lake. Ice axes and ropes are needed to navigate crevices. You can camp at the lake or at Nund Kol. *Day 5:* (16-19 km. to Nārā Nāg.) It's mostly downhill. The motorable road begins at Nārā Nāg. From nearby Wāṅgat you can catch a bus for Srinagar. Or, with luck, you might even be able to hitch a ride from Nārā Nāg itself.

### To the Haramukh peaks

*History:* Hara is the Kashmīri name for the Hindu god Hari. Mukh means 'mouth'. So the name of this mountain, which has three major peaks, means 'the Lord's mouth'. The local people had never climbed this difficult mountain, partly because of its sacredness. Or perhaps it was their apparent impregnability that got these peaks to be associated with the gods.

British climbers changed all that. M.A. Stein scaled the mountain in 1894. Gen. Bruce, in 1902, was the first from the Gaṅgabal side. In 1912, Dr. E.F. Névé and Col. Millais took the southern route. (Harish Kapadia writes that the Névé-Millais expedition took place in 1899. He dates Bruce's conquest to 1907.)

*The trek: Day 1:* Start from Srinagar. It is 50 km. to Nadihal. *Day 2:* 24 km. to Koodor. (You can combine Days 1 and 2, and reach Koodor on the first day itself.) *Day 3:* 13 km. to the Sarabal meadows. Set up the base camp here.

For 'Day 4)' there are three options. If you want to do all three peaks, add two (or three) days to the trek.

*Day 4-a):* The northern ('Triangulation') peak is 16,000' high. You can see it from the camp. The climb begins from the rocky side, which is to the left of the glacier. It continues through a chimney that starts below the glacier and goes on to the top of the ridge. From here one can go to the peak either by continuing up the rocks or by climbing over a snowfield. A day return is possible.

*Day 4-b):* The middle peak is at 16,500'. You can reach it from the northern peak. You will have to cross a snowfield. A day return is possible.

In the case of both these peaks, a day return is advised. Leave the base camp very early so that you return as early in the afternoon as possible. If your return is delayed you might get caught in the clouds, with all the attendant dangers.

*Day 4-c):* The 16,872' eastern peak is synonymous with the mountain itself. You could possibly ascend it from the base camp and be back the same day. However, most people do it in two days. On Day 4 go to the Sarabal lake, then eastward to the Shirsar, and thus to bottom of the



southern side of the mountain. Now you will have to climb almost two thousand very steep feet, over loose stones and boulders. In about three hours you will reach the bottom of the northern peak, where, you can camp for the night. Bakaya observes, 'There is a small, almost level place for one tent, a bit sheltered from the wind.'

On Day 5, begin from the base camp. Continuing sharp uphill, you should be able to reach a snowfield in just under three hours. After that you will come to a potentially dangerous 'sword blade edge,' after which you will be at the bottom of the middle peak. You have to go some of the way up towards the middle peak, then down to a saddle, which too can be dangerous. The final stretch to the main (eastern) peak is from its western side and is steep. You should be able to get back to the base camp (Sarabal) in about twelve hours.

Return to Srinagar either the way that you came, or through one of the two routes mentioned under 'Other routes' in the section on 'Gaṅgabal' in this chapter.

## Kashmîr-Kargil

### *Lehinwan-Pânîkhar (Kargil)-Heniskut*

There is a trek that normally takes 13 days from Lehinwan to Heniskut. (Make that 14 days if you stop at Sukhnai.) But do you have 13 or 14 days to spare? And do you really want to trek between places that are connected by bus/ truck? It is possible to drive from Kargil to Pânîkhar, Parkachik and Rangdum. So, you might want to do just one, or two, of the sections of this trek. You might, for instance, want to end this trek at Rangdum (Kargil, Ladâkh). (See also the 'Kishtwâr-Pânîkhar' trek in the volume on 'Jammû')

*Lehinwan-Pânîkhar: (6 days) Day 1):* Leave Lehinwan. 16 km. to Inshan; *Day 2):* Around 28 km. to Humpet. (The distance between Inshan and Humpet is 28 km., depending on the route that you take. Sukhnai is in between. It is 16 km. from Inshan. If you have an extra day, spend the night at Sukhnai.) *Day 3):* 13 km. to Kanital; *Day 4):* 11 km. to Lonvilad (Lovinad) Gali (pass); *Day 5):* 6 km. to Chalong Nallah; *Day 6):* 16 km. to Pânîkhar;

*Pânîkhar to Rangdum: (3 days) Day 7):* 22 km. from Pânîkhar to Parkachik (if you take several short cuts you can do this lap in about 5 hours); *Day 8):* 22 km. to Gulmatongo; *Day 9):* 20 km. to Rangdum;

*Rangdum-Heniskut: Day 10):* 5 hours from Rangdum to Rusgogdo; *Day 11):* 6 hours to the Kanji La base; *Day 12):* 4 hours to Kanji; *Day 13):* 4 hours to Heniskut.



### Pahalg  m-W  rwan (Jamm  )-Kargil (Lad  kh)

(8 or 9 days. A difficult trek.) This is perhaps the only trek that takes you through all three regions of the state (Kashmir, Jamm   and finally Lad  kh). As a result you will get to see a variety of cultures and landscapes. The trek begins at Cha  danw  r  , which is at a short motorable distance from Pahalg  m.

*Days 1 and 2:* (Pahalg  m to Cha  danw  r   by bus or taxi.) For details about the Sheshnag/ Zojipal stretch: see the chapter on 'The Amarn  th Y  tr  '. Briefly, it is thus:

Pahalg  m 0/ 7,500 Leave by car.

Cha  danw  r   16 km/ 9,500. Trek begins.

Pissu Top 3 km/ 11,500

Zoji Pal/ Bal 4 km/ 11,000

Naga Koti 3 km/ 11,500

Shesh N  g 3 km/ 12,500

Leave Pahalg  m by car/ bus early in the morning. Begin your trek at Cha  danw  r  . You will be at Zoji before noon and at Shesh Nag two hours later. You can spend the night at either place.

*Day 3:* (Roughly 16 km. to Purmandal, depending on where you had camped the previous night. The assumption in the next few lines is that you had camped at Zojipal.) You will need to cross the Sheshn  g stream, climb up to Sonasar (which is around 200m. higher than Zojipal), skirt the mountain on the right, walk some distance along the lake, climb up to a snow-covered, very difficult, c.13,000' pass, cross over to the other side, and finally go downhill for around 6 km. to scenic Purmandal. *Day 4:* (6 km. to Sukhnus.) Sukhnus is in the W  rwan valley (Jamm   province).

*Day 5:* (16 km. to Wompet.) Bad track, but picturesque area. Wompet is a Bakerw  l camp. *Day 6:* (20 km. to Kanital.) The track is tricky again. You have to go through little streams. Kanital, too, is a Bakerw  l camp. *Day 7:* (16 km./ 8 hrs. to Donara.) You have to go up to the Botkol glacier pass (c.14,000'). The glacier is positively dicey-and huge. It just goes on and on for miles, apparently all the way up to the Nun-Kun (in Kargil, Lad  kh). Downhill, on the other side of the glacier, though sometimes over snow, is easier. Even Donara has Bakerw  l camps. *Day 8:* (16 km. to Suru.) You will mostly travel along the left bank of the stream till you reach a snow-bridge that grows weaker as the weather gets warmer. (Therefore, this stretch is not advisable in warm weather.) Suru is around a kilometre and a half ahead.

Kargil is 50 km. from Suru. (Between the two is Sankoo, which is 16 km. from Suru.) You can catch a bus or hitch a lift in a truck for most of the way.



*Alternatives:* a) Instead of leaving the Amarnāth Yātrā route at Zojipal, you can turn towards Wārwan at Wawajan/ Shesh Nag. You can camp at Rangmarg (Kundran valley) the next night and reach Sukhnus the day after that.

b) You can go directly from Wompet to Donara in a single stage, but the route is tough.

*Detours and add-ons:* From Sukhnus you can go further into the Wārwan valley in Kishtwār.

### ***Pahalgām-Rangmarg-Butt Panchal-Pānikhar***

(7-8 days.) *Day 1:* (16 km. from Pahalgām to Chañdanwāri. You can do this stretch by bus or taxi. Or you can trek the distance in 4 hours.) Chañdanwāri is at between 2,896m. and 2,923m. If you travel to Chañdanwāri in a vehicle, you can save a day and do the second day's trek on the first day itself. *Day 2:* (13 km. to Shesh Nāg, 3,576m.-3,658m.) The first stretch, to Pissu Top, is very stiff, but mercifully is just half a kilometre long. *Day 3:* (16 km./ 8 hours to Zabarmarg/ Rangmarg.) The ascent to the Shingum La/ Saninalla pass (4,250m.) is as stiff as the downhill trek after the pass. *Day 4:* (15 km./ 9 hours to Humpet, 3,260m.) The climb to picturesque Humpet is up a far more gradual slope, along a river. *Day 5:* (18 km. to Kanital.) Trek till you reach the bottom of the glacier, where you can pitch your tents. *Day 6:* (11 km./ 5 hours to the Butt Panchal pass, 4,800m.) The trek is uphill on a gentle slope and through big rocks and a fragmented glacier. The major peak that you see from the pass is the Bobang. Pitch your tents on or near this pass, which is 1 km. long. *Day 7:* (5 hours to Donara.) Go downhill through a glacier. *Day 8:* (14 km./ 5 hours to Pānikhar, 3,100m.) Trek along River Chelong. Pānikhar is connected by bus to Kargil town. There's an irregular bus to Zāṅskār, too.

*An alternative route: Pahalgām-Lonvilad/ Lovinad-Pānikhar:* (7-8 days.) Days 1 to 5 are the same as in the 'Pahalgām-Rangmarg-Butt Panchal-Pānikhar' trek. On 'Day 5' camp at Kanital Nallah, just short of the base of the glacier. *Day 6:* (11 km. from Kanital Nallah to Lovinad Galli, c.4600m. You can camp at the base of the Galli.) *Day 7:* (22 km. to Pānikhar, via and along the Chelong Nallah. You can do this stretch in one or two days. On Day 7 you could trek just 6 km. to Chelong and on Day 8, the remaining 16 km.)

(Please see the volume on 'Jammū' for treks from Kishtwār [Jammū] to Pānikhar. They cover much the same ground as above. Details given in that volume have not been repeated here.)



## Kashmîr-Jammû

### Ânañtnâg-Doda

Several routes from the Ânañtnâg district of Kashmîr to the Doda district of Jammû are described in this section. The Achâbal-Kishtwâr route is the most popular traditional trek. However, you can do most of even that route by jeep.

**Achâbal-Kishtwâr:** (4 days.) There are buses from Srinagar to Achâbal. Kothair is a few kilometres to the south-west of Achâbal. The Chingam pass gets snowed under by November. *Day 1:* (19 km. from Kothair to Dooso/ Dyus/ Deosar, c.7,400'.) The trek is mostly through an open valley. Camp at Dhaksun or Rajparan above Dooso, or in the forest rest house on the meadow. *Day 2:* (19/ 22 km. to Synthan.) Two paths lead to Synthan (also spelt Simthan). The bridle path (for ponies) is longer than the track for trekkers. Climb 400' to Kodan. Walk to Harshan. Climb up to the Chingam pass (c.12,300'). (Also spelt Chingram.) Descend to Synthan, which has a forest rest house. *Day 3:* (21 km. to Chatru.) Descend to the Tsingam Pass, which is half-way to Chatrû. *Day 4:* (8 km. to the Mughal Maidân, followed by another 18-20 km. to Kishtwâr. You can do this in one or two days.) Around 6 km. after Mughal Maidân you will meet the Wârwan river. Walk along it for around 3 km. Cross it, then travel along the Chandrabhâgâ for 2 km. and then climb up a steep slope to the Kishtwâr plateau.

**Kothair:** (Also spelt Kother.) Ruins of an old, square, Hindu monument, as well as a tank, exist in the village. There are some iron mines three kilometres away.

**Dooso:** The village is situated on the right bank of the Brinhar stream. There is a large valley between the hills nearby and the next ridge.

**Akingam-Kishtwâr:** (5 days.) Akingam is five kilometres from the Achâbal gardens. You can go there by bus from Srinagar. *Day 1:* (19 km. from Akingam to Wangam.) Bakaya recommends a visit to the 'interesting spring of Sundabrari' nearby. *Day 2:* (19 km. to Karabuduram, c.9,200'.) The first stretch consists of a pretty, elevated valley. This is followed by an ascent, through forests, to Marbal, and thence to the meadows of Karabuduram. *Day 3:* (19 km. to Singpur, c.6,900'.) A stiff climb, some of it over snow, to the Marbal pass (11,550') is followed by a descent, equally sharp for the first 3 km., and then gentler along the Kashir Kohl stream. *Day 4:* (18 km. to the Mughal Maidân.) The first half consists of a descent to Chatru which, too, is on the banks of the Kashir Kohl stream. The Sinchun Kohl is opposite. Mughal Maidân is a further 7-8 km. ahead. It is a small village on a plain, above a stream. *Day 5:* (18-20 km. to Kishtwâr.) After around 6 km. you will meet the Wârwan river. Walk along



it for around 3 km., cross it, then travel along the Chandrabhaga for 2 km. and then climb up to the Kishtwâr plateau.

**Marbal:** This is a historic pass. Shâh Shuja, the fugitive former Amir of Kabul, helped by Raja Tej Singh of Kishtwâr, tried to invade Kashmîr through this pass around AD 1820. Azim Khân, the Afghân governor of Kashmîr, countered them by marching towards the pass with an army. Shâh Shuja retreated when he heard of Azim's advance. To save face, Shuja blamed snowfall on and around the pass.

**Pahalgâm-Kishtwâr:** (Around 9 days.) *Days 1-4:* (4 days to Sukhnus: See the 'Pahalgâm-Wârwan-Kargil' trek in this chapter.) *Day 5:* (8 hours from Sukhnus to Inshan, also spelt Inshin.) Even though there will be occasional ascents, you will mainly be losing height today. *Day 6:* (40 km. to Marau, in one or two days.) *Day 7:* (Night halt at Sarwa.) *Day 8:* (Night halt at Nauzil.) *Day 9:* (Reach Kishtwâr)

*A variant:* **Pahalgâm-Inshan (Jammû)-Shangas (Kashmîr)** *Day 6:* (16 km./ 5 hrs. from Inshan to a camp.) There is no populated area midway between Inshan and Gauran. So camp at any decent site that you find after you have trekked for 5 or 5½ hours. *Day 7:* (16 km./ 5 hrs. to Gauran.) You will go up a trail that's rocky and sometimes soggy to the Margan Pass (c.11,500'). The descent will be stiff till you reach a valley. *Day 8:* (24 km./ 6 hrs. to Shangas.) It's mainly a comfortable trek today. After 11 km. you will reach Naubug. The climb to the Hockim Galî pass follows. The descent is mostly through woods.

Shangas is a roadhead. You can travel from here to Srinagar by bus.

### **Pulwâmâ-Râjourî**

**Shopiân-Thannâ Mandi:** (5 days.) There are buses from Srinagar to Shopiân. Part of this trek is on the Mughal Route. *Day 1:* (Shopiân to Hurapur or Sukhsarai.) Walk along the right bank of the Rambîârâ river. The ascent begins around the time that the valley starts getting narrow. The track goes through a meadow, past flowers. Sukhsarai is six km. away. You can camp at either Hurapur or Sukhsarai. The advantage of camping at the latter is that you can do the Sukhsarai-Poshiana stretch in a single 32 km., eight-or nine-hour day. You will thus save a day, and will be able to skip Day 2's night halt at the Aliabad Sarai.

**Hurapur:** This is an ancient village, originally called Surapur or 'the town of Sura'. Sura was a legendary minister in King Avanti Varman's court. The fort that had been built here to protect the route has since turned to dust. (A lot of people in Kashmîr call this place 'Hirpur.' On the Râjourî side the pronunciation 'Hurapur' is more popular.)

*Day 2:* (21 km. from Hurapur to the Aliabad Sarai, 9,700'.) You need to ford the river early in the day today. It is sharp uphill after that, sometimes through precipices.



*The Aliabad Sarai:* A sarai (serai, as in caravanserai) is a hospice, a dormitory on a highway, where travellers would spend the night. Since Aliabad was a major halting place on the Mughal Route, being 84 miles from Bhimbar (in the Râjourî district of Jammû) and 46 miles from Srinagar, the Mughals had constructed a sarai there. The *Gazetteer* notes, '(It) offers bad accommodation to travellers [and] stands alone in wild and dreary solitude... Some supplies are procurable [when] the pass is open... The roads from Râjaorî *via* the Nandan Sar and the Darhal pass debouch here.'

*Day 3:* (18 km. from the Aliabad Sarai to Poshiana.) Climb up a gradual slope to the pass (11,500'), which is bracketed by peaks that are between 14,000' and 15,000'. You will then descend to Chittâ Pânî. Shortly after the pass, you might have to walk over snow in May, perhaps even in early June. After you cross the Chittâ Pânî ('white water') stream, the track will start climbing once again, for 5 or 6 kilometres. The last stretch to Poshiana is easy.

Poshiana is one of many seasonal villages in the state inhabited in summer and forsaken in winter. Nomadic shepherds/ cowherds desert most of the other seasonal villages well before snow blankets their pastures. Not so with Poshiana. It exists mainly as a halting place on the Râjourî-Kashmir route. It used to have a *sarai*. Don't count on staying with the villagers, though. They normally sell grains and supply ponies to travellers. Water is not very easily available. The village is well above the right bank of Chittâ Pânî. The huts have been built on terraces. Their roofs rest on the incline. This, to an extent, prevents them from being damaged by snow-storms.

*Day 4:* (16 km. to Behram Gallâ.) A sharp descent leads to a stream. The track goes along the stream after that, and is undulating. There is a rest house in Behram Gallâ. *Day 5:* (16 km. to Thannâ Mandi.) You need to climb up to the Rattan Pir pass (c.8,200'). In the process you will pass through forests of chestnut, elm and deodar. After that it is downhill to Thannâ Mandi. There are buses from Thannâ Mandi to Râjourî, which is 23 km. away.

*Detour:* Two paths lead down from the Rattan Pir pass. Poonch is on the right while the path on the left leads to Thannâ Mandi. So, 'Day 5' could instead be thus: (24 km. from Behram Gallâ to Suran.) Climb to the Rattan Pir pass. Take the right branch of the path. Go down a sharp slope. You will reach a stream. A while later the track will cross the Chittâ Pânî stream and will lead to Suran. From Suran you can take a bus to Poonch town, which is 16 km. away.

#### **Pulwâmâ-Udhampur**

**Aharbal-Réâsi:** See the 'Aharbal-Kounsar Nâg' trek (and within that, "Add-ons") in this chapter.



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### From Srînagar to Muzaffarâbâd

So long as travel to the occupied areas remains restricted, the routes given in this chapter have no practical use for the average reader. It is mainly a historical record of the trekking routes that existed till 1947. The only ones who use these routes at present are the 'Visitors Sans Visas' who have been crossing over from Pâkistân and POK (Pâkistân Occupied Kashmîr) since around 1988. Many of these routes are partly or entirely 'motorable' today.

Almost all distances in this chapter are in miles; that being the unit favoured before 1947, and still preferred in Pâkistân and POK. 1 mile = 1.6 kilometres. Some distances have been given in 'kos,' a South Asian unit, which is equal to almost a mile and a half, or around two and a half kilometres. Wherever the distance has been given both in hours and miles, it means that that particular distance is only a good guess. The timings given assume able-bodied men in their late teens or early twenties.

Many of the routes mentioned below pass through Jammû province. They have been included in the 'Kashmîr' volume because all of them start from or lead to Kashmîr. Some of the starting (or terminal) points mentioned are in Pâkistân and not in POK.

*The main trekking routes that pass through what is now called 'AJK'*

**Abbotabâd to Srînagar:** Day 1: (Abbotabâd to Mânsehrâ: 15 miles.) Day 2: (16 miles to Garhî.) Day 3: (10 miles to Muzaffarâbâd.) Day 4: (17 miles to Hattîâñ.) Day 5: (11 miles to Kañdâ.) Day 6: (12 miles to Kathâi.) Day 7: (12 miles to Shâhadrâ.) Day 8: (14 miles to Giñgl.) Day 9: (19 miles to Bâramullâ.) Day 10: (31 miles to Srînagar.)

**Gujrât-Bhimber-Shopian-Srînagar:** Day 1: (12 miles from Gujrât to Daulat Nagar.) Day 2: (8 miles to Kotlâ.) Day 3: (9 miles to Bhimber.) Day 4: (15 miles to Saîdâbâd.) Day 5: (13 miles to Naosherâ.) Day 6: (13 miles to the Chingus serâi.) Day 7: (14 miles to Râjourî.) Day 8: (14 miles to Thannâ Mañdî.) Day 9: (11 miles to Behrâm Gallâ.) Day 10: (8 miles to



Poshiânâ.) *Day 11:* (11 miles to the Aliâbâd serâi.) *Day 12:* (12 miles to Hirpur.) *Day 13:* (8 miles to Shopiân.) *Day 14:* (11 miles to Ramû.) *Day 15:* (18 miles to Srinagar.)

**Gujrât-Kotli-Poonch-Uri-Srinagar:** *Day 1:* (12 miles from Gujrât to Daulat Nagar.) *Day 2:* (8 miles to Kotlâ.) *Day 3:* (9 miles to Bhimber.) *Day 4:* (15 miles to Saidâbâd.) *Day 5:* (12 kos to Dharamsâl.) *Day 6:* (5 kos to Koh é Ruti.) *Day 7:* (5 kos to Dhunâ.) *Day 8:* (4 kos to Kotli.) *Day 9:* (8 kos to Serâ.) *Day 10:* (7 kos to Poonch.) *Day 11:* (9 miles to Kahûtâ, which Pâkistân now calls Kahûtâ Forward.) *Day 12:* (8 miles to Aliâbâd.) *Day 13:* (7 miles to Hyderâbâd.) *Day 14:* (10 miles to Uri.) *Day 15:* (54 miles to Srinagar.)

**Guréz to Astore:** (Astore is also spelt without the 'e.' In any case the 'e' is silent.) *Day 1:* (5 kos from Guréz to Bañglâ Bal.) *Day 2:* (5 kos to Gatûmî.) *Day 3:* (5 kos to Kâjanmar.) *Day 4:* (5 kos to Loyuhallol.) *Day 5:* (5 kos to Ispeh.) *Day 6:* (5 kos to Chugâm and Maitseh.) *Day 7:* (5 kos to Gurukot.) *Day 8:* (5 kos to Astore.)

**Guréz to Muzaffarâbâd:** *Day 1:* (6 hours/ 15 miles from Guréz to Bakthaor (Bakhtâwar).) *Day 2:* (3 hours/ 4 miles to Geshart.) *Day 3:* (5 hours/ 7 miles to Dûdî.) *Day 4:* (4 hours/ 9 miles to Matsil.) *Day 5:* (6 hours/ 13 miles to Thien.) *Day 6:* (3 hours/ 6 miles to a campsite in a forest some 1,800' above Thien.) *Day 7:* (5 hours/ 10 miles to what used to be called Mokhta Malik ki Kothi.) *Day 8:* (6 hours/ 11 miles to Sharidi.) *Day 9:* (4½ hours/ 12 miles to Dûdniâl) *Day 10:* (5 ½ miles/ 12 miles to Tali Lohât.) *Day 11:* (4 hours/ 9 miles to Lallâ.) *Day 12:* (4 hours/ 8 miles to a campsite a kilometre south of Darral, near the river.) *Day 13:* (4 ½ hours/ 10 miles to Bâran.) *Day 14:* (3 ½ hours/ 6 miles to Chow Gallî.) *Day 15:* (3 hours/ 8 miles to Bâlâgrâñ.) *Day 16:* (5 hours/ 11 miles to Mandal.) *Day 17:* (5 hours/ 12 miles to Muzaffarâbâd.)

**Guréz to Sirdâri:** *Day 1:* (5 hours/ 12 miles from Guréz to Kanzalwan.) *Day 2:* (4 hours/ 11 miles to Thaobat, now known as Tao Butt.) *Day 3:* (2 hours/ 5 miles to Sirdâri.)

**Murree-Kohâlâ-Bârâmullâ-Srinagar:** *Day 1:* (12 miles Murree to Dewal.) *Day 2:* (9 miles to Kohâlâ.) *Day 3:* (11 miles to Chatrkalas.) *Day 4:* (12 miles to Rara.) *Day 5:* (12 miles to Tindali.) *Day 6:* (10 miles to Ghari.) *Day 7:* (12 miles to Hatti.) *Day 8:* (15 miles to Chakothî.) *Day 9:* (16 miles to Uri.) *Day 10:* (14 miles to Naosherâ.) *Day 11:* (9 miles to Bârâmullâ.) *Day 12:* (14 miles to Pattan.) *Day 13:* (17 miles to Srinagar.)

**Muzaffarâbâd-Nattishannar (aka Nastichun) Galli-Sopore-Srinagar:** *Day 1:* (4 ½ hours/ 8 miles from Muzaffarâbâd to Nûrserai.) *Day 2:* (4 hours/ 8 miles to Pañchgrâñ.) *Day 3:* (4 hours/ 9 miles to Nosudda Noseri.) *Day 4:* (3 hours/ 6 miles to Titwâl.) *Day 5:* (4 hours/ 10 miles to Hâji Nâr.)



Day 6: (5 hours/ 10 miles to Drañgiyârî.) Day 7: (3 ½ hours/ 10 miles to Shâlûrâh.) Day 8: (5 hours/ 13 miles to Chogal.) Day 9: (5 hours/ 13 miles to Sopore.) Day 10: (15 miles to Pattan.) Day 11: (17 miles to Srinagar.)

**Srinagar-Tos(h)â Maidân pass-Jehlum (Pâkistân):** Day 1: (5 ½ hours/ 14 miles from Srinagar to Makahâmâ.) Day 2: (4 hours/ 10 miles to Drañg.) Day 3: (3 hours/ 7 miles to Wattadâr.) Day 4: (Approximately 17 miles to Arigâm.) Day 5: (5 hours/ 9 miles to Mañdi.) Day 6: (5 hours/ 12 miles to Poonch.) Day 7: (6 hours/ 16 miles to Serâ.) Day 8: (6 hours/ 13 miles to Kotli.) Day 9: (5 hours/ 10 miles to Gulpur.) Day 10: (6 hours/ 13 miles to Radâni.) Day 11: (6 hours/ 15 miles to Mirpur.) Day 12: (4 hours/ 11 miles to the Gatiâlâ Ferry.) Day 13: (11 miles plus the sailing time [3 hours] to Jehlum.)

*Notes about some of the villages and towns mentioned in the trekking routes:*

Many of these villages are in 'AJK.' Some are in Pâkistân (in West Punjâb). The rest are in the part of the state actually administered by India. (Poonch, Mirpur, Kotli and Râjourî districts, as well as important towns like Naosherâ are in Jammû province.)

**Abbotâbâd** is in the Hazârâ region. It has traditionally had a quiet and well maintained civil lines and cantonment.

**Arigâm** (aka Yarigâm) is a village in Poonch. It is on the slopes of a hill that leads up to the Toshâ Maidân pass. Below it is the right bank of the Dali Nar stream. Its population is a mix of Gujjars and ethnic Kashmiris. Around Arigam there are several *dhoks* (pastures where nomadic Gujjars camp in summer): notably the Phalwaran, the Sundar, the Sultân Pathrî and the Linjiburji *dhoks*.

**Bakthaor** or Bakhtâwar is known as Babâtor to the Dards. This is a village in Guréz valley, on the left bank of the Kishan Gañgâ, some three kilometres north of Kanzalwan. The lush forests, pastures and mountains around it make it particularly scenic. A shrine dedicated to Bâbâ Dâûd Khâkî has been built in the middle of a grove of willows.

**Bâlâgrân** has always been a fertile, green and prosperous village, with an old mosque. It is built above the right bank of the Neelum/ Kishan Gañgâ on the track that leads to Muzaffarâbâd. There are terraced mountains above it, and rice fields leading down to the river below it. In summer it gets quite hot. So the people of the village have, for centuries, been shifting to the Buttungi Dhok in the mountains whenever the weather gets too hot.

**Bâran** is a very long village in Lower Dâwar, built above the right bank of the Kishan Gañgâ. Among its historical buildings is the house of Sher Ahmed Khân, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Râjâ of Karnâh. It also has a mediæval mosque.



**Behrâm Gallâ** is a little village in Poonch. It is on a hill that rises between the Suran and Purnoi streams. Till the early twentieth century it had a small, square mud serai for travellers. On the hill across the Suran is an old stone fort.

**Bhimber** is an important, historic town. Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it had two rest-houses for travellers. It is on the right bank of the Bhimber stream. It is roughly 47 kilometres (30 miles) north of Gujrât, 35 kilometres (22 miles) east of Jhelum town, 80 km. (50 miles) north-west of Sialkot and 240 km. (150 miles) from Srinagar (by the Pîr Pañjâl route). There are low hills around the town.

Bhimber is soaked in history. The old town is almost entirely built of stone. It has from time to time been an independent kingdom. The Mughals annexed it; and built a serâi in the heart of the town. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the serâi had been converted into a police station and official residence. After the Mughal empire collapsed, Bhimber again declared its independence. Then, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Raja Gulâb Singh defeated Bhimber's last king, Sultân Khân, on behalf of Mahârâjâ Ranjit Singh of Lahore. At a slight distance from the old town is a mediæval brick fort, in addition to the ruined palace of Bhimber's own kings.

Some of Bhimber's importance owes to its being the old 'roadhead' for people travelling to Kashmir. For that reason it has, for several centuries now, had places for travellers to stay at, as well as a camping ground.

**Chakothî** is the first town across the line of control, when crossing over from the Indian side into the occupied territory.

**Chatrkalas** is a traditional halting place and has a Dogrâ-era dak bungalow.

**Chogal** is a major, sprawling village built near River Pohrû. It is famous for the mediæval shrine of Sheikh Ahmed Sâheb and an old mosque. The 19<sup>th</sup> century traveller Vigne wrote glowingly of the panoramic view from the hill near Chogal. The view was 'replete with most of the beauties of sylvan scenery... composed of ridges and hollows, plains and cultivated spots, partly rescued by the hand of man, from the profusion of pine forest, by which they are so extensively covered, and around all is extended the noble and unbroken amphitheatre of mountain by which this end of Kashmir is bounded.'

**Chow Gallî** leads to a pass that is snowed under in winter.

**Dewal**, like neighbouring Murree, is in the hills, but at a lower altitude. There are woods nearby. Dewal has an old fort and a 19<sup>th</sup> century dak bungalow.

**Dharamsâl** (Dharamshâlâ) is a generic name for rest-houses attached to Hîndû temples. On the way from Saidabad to this particular dharamshala you will pass the castle of Kambîr.



**Dhunâ** is not a very good place to camp at because no facilities are available. Besides, it is extremely hot in summer. However, the nearby River Ban yields good fish in plenty.

**Drañg** is in the Beerwâ(h) area. It is in the foothills of the mountains that lead to Toshâ Maidân. There is a forest nearby. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there used to be a custom house here. Drañg has a mediæval mosque.

**Drañgiyâri** is the summer camp (*dhok*) of a Gujjar clan. It consists of a large pasture and a forest near the west bank of the Bangas stream. The Natishannar (aka Nastichun) Galli (pass) lies just above. A path leads from here to Shâlûrâh and then goes on to the Karnâh valley.

**Dûdniâl** has a mediæval *musâfir khânâ* (travellers' lodge) because it has traditionally been an important halting place. This is a village in the upper part of Dâwar and is on the right bank of River Kishan Gañgâ.

**Garhî** is a large village in the hills. It is on the left bank of River Nainsukh. There used to be a nineteenth century rope and suspension bridge across the river. Its rest house dates to mediæval times. The road to Muzaffarâbâd town first goes up to the Duballi pass and then comes down gently towards the Neelum/ Kishan Gañgâ.

**Gatiâlâ Ferry** is a historic ferry, exactly halfway between Mirpur and Jehlum, being 18 km. from each. The ferry connects the Piswâl and Pindî villages of Jehlum. It takes more than three hours to cross the Jehlum by traditional boats. Modern, motorised boats, of course, are much faster.

**Geshart** is the name of a majestic mountain with birch forests, a stream that flows in that area and a village. Nomadic shepherds graze their flock on the pastures of Geshart.

**Giñgl** is a village above the river. There is a waterfall halfway between Kathâi and Giñgl. It has a mediæval double-storeyed travellers' bungalow.

**Gujrât** is a major town in the Punjâb (Pakistan). It took its name from the Gujjar (cowherd) rulers of the area.

**Gulpur** is in Poonch district. It is in a valley above the right bank of the Poonch Tawi. The Tat stream is on one side of the village and River Bitarh on the other. The fort of Troach is on a hill almost two kilometres away.

**Hâjî Nâr** might or might not ever become a major tourist destination, because of its relative remoteness, but trekkers have always been in love with its natural beauty. It is near one of the branches of the Shamsabari stream, in the north-eastern part of Karnâh. It is on the road to Shâlûrâh. The Natishannar (aka Nastichun) and Kukwa Galli passes are in the mountains immediately above Hâjî Nâr. Both passes are on the traditional routes to the Valley of Kashmir. Dumbâ village is at a very short distance.



The beauty of the village lies in its large grazing ground, which has trees around it and a stream flowing through. The weary trekker loves this area also because here the gradient of the mountain is so gentle that it gains height without tiring the traveller at all.

**Hattîân** (or Hatti) is a small village in the foothills. It has a mediæval travellers' bungalow on the banks of the Jehlum. In that era the river was crossed by a rope suspension bridge.

**Hirpur** (aka Hurpur) is a traditional halting place at the centre of a valley. The Mughals had built a serâi here.

**Kahûtâ** is in POK. There is a Kahûtâ in Pâkistân, too, and is far more famous because of Pâkistân's nuclear facilities. To distinguish between the two, Pâkistân uses the name 'Kahûtâ Forward' for the Kahûtâ of POK. This Kahûtâ is some 15 km. north of Poonch, on the route to the Hâjî Pir pass. It is a small, fertile village, built on a plain above the Bitarh stream. There are hills all around. (There is a third Kahûtâ, too: in the direction of Lolâb.)

**Kaṇḍâ** is a small village with a travellers' bungalow. There are three or four streams within a radius of 6 kilometres (4 miles). The road to Murree, too, is nearby.

**Kanzalwan** (7,400') is in Guréz valley. The Dards call it Kanzalwar. It lies on the traditional paths leading to Bândîpur (in the direction of Srinagar), Astore (through the valley of the Gagnai stream) and Skardu. Bândîpur is 25 miles/ 40 km. away. Kanzalwan is built on the left bank of the Kishan Gaṅgâ. There is a precipitous but wooded mountain nearby.

Three springs give it its water. Irrigation comes mainly from the Burzil (or Burzi Dak) stream.

**Kathâi** is a village on a wide plateau above the river. There is an old mud fort nearby.

**Kotlâ** is a small town with an old history. It is fairly prosperous and has grown considerably in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Kotli:** There are several towns of this name. This particular Kotli is on the left bank of the Poonch Tawî on a large flat basin surrounded by low hills. It is roughly 45 km. south of Poonch and around 65 km. north of Mîrpur. Naosherâ and Bhimber are in the south-east.

Kotli has always been an important town, and has been a tehsil headquarters since at least the Dogrâ era. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century it was upgraded and made a district.

Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Kotli was so popular with travellers that Bates observed, that 'There is ... a wretched *bârâdarî*, usually occupied by European travellers.' This was in addition to 'a good brick-house on the high bank of the Katir river.'

Kotli is very hot in summer.



**Kohâlâ**, also known as Pathan (the Pass), is 33 km. northeast of Murree and 50 km. from Hattian. A path from here leads to Poonch. It has always been an important highlight of the highway that led from the British-ruled territory to the Mahârâjâ's state. It is built high above the craggy and precipitous left bank of the Jehlum. Even in the Dogrâ era it was a favourite of tourists, because of which a fine dak bungalow was built on the right bank of the Jehlum.

**Koh é Ruti** is located on a track rooted in history. Not very far from this hill, in the direction of 'Dharamsâl,' there are two pavilions (*bârâdaris*) on a bank of River Ban. They are perhaps of Mughal vintage. The Devigarh castle is close to the Dharamsâl-Koh é Ruti track.

**Makahâmâ** is a suburb of Srinagar. It is a big village and is in two parts, Ban Makahâmâ and Pet Makahâmâ. Together the two are called Hardo ('the two') Makahâmâ. The shrine of Reshî Sâheb is the main highlight of Ban Makahâmâ.

**Mandal's** importance owes to the fact that it is the best halting place immediately before Muzaffarâbâd. It is generally believed that there is not a single village in all of 'AJK' where the entire population speaks the Kashmirî language at home. A third of the population (four of the thirteen original families) of this small village has traditionally been of ethnic Kashmirî origin. I wonder if they know even a single word of the language of their ancestors.

The village is some 20 kilometres before Muzaffarâbâd and is built on the right bank of the Neelum/ Kishan Gañgâ. On the other side is the Pakoti stream and across the stream is a village called Draw. The twin villages, linked by an old bridge, are called Mandal-Draw.

**Mañdî** is an important historical town in Poonch, located in a narrow valley. The Gagrîn and Dali Nar streams merge at a short distance north of the town. The main Mañdî township is on the left bank of the river. Mediæval government buildings, notably the summer house of the Râjâ of Poonch, are on the other bank. The Hil Bâoli spring is known for its good water.

This is a trading town. For that reason there was a custom house here in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The people of Mañdî would trade wool products (mainly blankets and local tweed), salt and ghee (clarified butter) with Kashmir. The majority of the population here has traditionally been Shîa Muslim.

**Mirpur:** Today Muzaffarâbâd is the 'capital' of the occupied areas called 'Âzâd' Jammû and Kashmir. However, Mirpur was the biggest town that the Pâkistâni forces managed to occupy in all of Jammû and Kashmir in 1947. At that stage Muzaffarâbâd was only a tiny fraction of Mirpur town. Mirpur is prosperous because of good agriculture in the neighbouring villages.



Besides, several important roads meet at Mîrpur. Jehlum (Punjâb) is around 40 km. to the south. Kotlî is some 65 km. north. Chaumukh is only 16 km. away. Above all, the water table in Mîrpur is high. As a result there has always been plenty of good drinking water. This is in contrast to the water-deficient villages that occur before it on the trekking route mentioned in this chapter.

This town, in the Naosherâ region, has historically had wide roads and fine houses. The Dogrâs built the Raghunâth Sami temple, which probably is the most elegant old building in town. The Bhagatwâllâh Bâoli (spring) is another old historical structure. In addition, it has several mediæval temples, mosques, Muslim shrines and a gurudwârâ.

**Murree**, like so many other hill stations in undivided India, started out as a health-resort. The British would send their ailing employees to places like Murree (then spelt Mari), to recover. It is some 65 km. from Râwalpindî/ Islâmâbâd (Pâkistân).

Since at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a school has emerged which claims that the resort has been named after Mother Mary, who is supposed to be buried here. (See the chapter on 'Lord Jesus...')

**Nattishannar** (aka **Nastichun**) **Galli** has always been the pass (and route) most preferred by those travelling between what used to be called the Uttar (north) pargana (district) and the Karnâh valley. Its Kashmiri name, **Nastichun** (also spelt **Nastachun**), means 'cut-nose.' The pass is green and has plenty of grass growing on it. Travellers like the pass because it is wide, ponies loaded with cargo can go through it and it is closed for only three months in winter. (During those three months, November to January, travellers use the all-weather Kukwa Galli, which is at a lower altitude.)

On one side of the **Nastichun** pass (i.e. in the south) is the tall **Shamsabari** range and on the other (i.e. in the north) are the much lower **Nattishannar** mountains.

**Naosherâ**: See the chapter on 'Râjourî' in the 'Jammû' volume. ('Naosherâ' means 'new town.' There are countless Naosherâs in north India: I know of one each in Kashmir, Jammû and the Punjâb.)

**Nosudda** and **Nosheri** are two separate villages, built on opposite banks of the Neelum/ Kishan Gañgâ. **Nosheri** is famous for the shrine of Sultân Dariyâ Sâheb.

**Nûrserai** has traditionally been the headquarters of a police precinct and, thus, is an important little town. It is built well above the left bank of the Neelum/ Kishan Gañgâ, on a steep hill. **Kuri**, an old town, is across the river. The shrine of Hassan Shâh Sâheb **Nûrserai** is the main attraction of the town. There is a spring in **Nûrserai**, known for the good quality of its water.



Poshiānā is a small village perched in the middle of a steep mountain. There is plenty of grass all around. Few flat spaces are available to camp on. Therefore, over the centuries, travellers have been camping on the flat tops of houses. North of Poshīānā is a road that goes up to the Chittā Pānī pass (14,540') and then leads into the Valley of Kashmīr. The pass normally opens in the first week of June. Beyond the pass is the small Chittā Pānī (white water) stream and waterfall. You can camp near the lower end of the waterfall.

Radānī is a small town in the Naosherā area. The shrine of Nūr Ali Shāh Sāheb is its best-known attraction.

Ramū is a large village. There is an old travellers' lodge nearby. Four or five miles from here, in the direction of Shopian, is an old serai. There is a dharamshālā close to Ramu, being around two miles away. There is also a camping ground nearby.

In the direction of Srīnagar, too, there are serais. The Khānpur serai is 6 miles from Ramu. The Rām Bāgh serai is now part of Srīnagar proper, being in the grand Dogrā temple complex near the bridge of the same name, on the road to the airport.

Rara is on the left bank of the Jehlum, close to the point where the Nainsukh (Kunara) river merges with it.

Saīdābād village has since mediæval times been a traditional halting place for travellers, partly because essential commodities are easy to obtain. There is a 19<sup>th</sup> century travellers' bungalow made of stone near the village. The Samani Serāi is a few hundred metres further ahead.

Serā (or Serar) is an old market town in Poonch. It was an important halting place on the Poonch-Kotlī route. As a result it had two *Hīñdū dharamshālās* and a *bārādārī* (pavilion) for travellers to stay in. All three were in a poor shape even in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Shālūrāh is famous for its fort. Like the township, it is on the left bank of River Kāmil. The township has for centuries been the headquarters of a *tehsil*, the unit immediately below a district, and has thus always had a small service-sector.

The brick and stone fort is one of the better ones in the state. Unusually, it is on a plain and not on a hillock, and it has no moat or ditch around it. The Dogrā Mahārājās built it in the 1860s. There used to be a mediæval fort, grander and stronger than the present one, at the same site. When Raja Sher Khān of Karnāh attacked Shālūrāh, also in the 1860s, he destroyed the older fort.

Near the fort's main entrance are a stream and a 19<sup>th</sup> century mosque. Sharidi has always been an important village. It is in Upper Dāwar, on the left bank of River Kishan Gaṅgā. Sharidi has been the headquarters of a police precinct since at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Part of its importance also owes to its being located on the route from Kashmir to Chilas. In olden times people crossed over to the other bank of the Kishan Gañgâ by a rope bridge (*zampâ*). The river below it has a strong current and is too dangerous for swimming.

*Syed Jamâl Sâheb's* shrine has been built in a walnut grove above the stream. There is a flat ground near it, on which trekkers normally camp.

*The fort:* Sharidi has a mediæval mud fort. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century it had become a garrison and the residence of the head of the police station (*thânedâr*). The fort has been built on a hillock above the Madhumati stream. It has square outer walls and a watch tower at each corner.

*Ruined Hiñdû temple:* A little less than a kilometre from the fort is a ruined Hiñdû temple made of stone. It, too, is at an elevation and above the Madhumati. One has to climb up 63 stone steps to reach what must have been a fairly impressive structure. It had a double porchway. Just its outer walls, which are massive and made of stone, would today cost more than the price of a dozen middle-class houses.

In mediæval times the temple had the reputation of having a fabulous treasure buried beneath it. It is said that the Râjâ of Karnâh decided to steal the treasure. His force tried to prise the stones loose. They were unable to find any treasure but, in the process, they shook up and unsettled much of the structure. Which is why the temple has been in ruins for several centuries now.

Bates wrote in the 1870s, 'This fane [temple] seems to be venerated by Hiñdûs and Mohamedans alike, the ministering priest stating that whoever approaches it with a pure heart, whatever his religion, obtains the fruition of his petitions.'

**Sirdâri** is at the western end of Guréz. It is close to the right bank of the Kishan Gañgâ. In the 18<sup>th</sup> (or early 19<sup>th</sup>) century the entire old village was washed away by a flood. So the village was rebuilt above a small stream.

**Tali Lohât** is a traditional halting place. Travellers camp near the stream, as well as in large rocky caves at a little distance from the village. It is a relatively prosperous village because even in mediæval times its *kadal* bridge was of a higher quality than the rope bridges of the hills.

**Thaobut**, as we have seen in the chapter on 'Âzâd' Jammû and Kashmir, is an incredibly green place. (It is now spelt Tao Butt.) The place is in the Guréz region and is situated near the right bank of the Neelum/ Kishan Gañgâ. It is close to where the Gagai stream meets the Kishan Gañgâ.



Titwâl has, since late mediæval times, been the headquarters of a police precinct. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it also had a custom house. (I used to wonder why. Was Tîtwâl a border town even then? It wasn't. Then why a custom house? Later I noticed that in that era there were custom houses at places as deep inside the Dogrâ state as Drañg. Obviously, these custom houses charged some internal tax and not just frontier taxes.)

Titwâl is on the left bank of the Neelum/ Kishan Gañgâ. The Qâzî Nâg stream joins the river a little below the town. The road to Karnâh is above the Qâzî Nâg. The concept of toll-bridges was known even in the Dogrâ era. They replaced the old rope bridge with a sturdy *kadal* (Kashmîrî-type bridge). However, they charged a small fee from everyone who used the new bridge.

Wattadâr has a large open ground on which nomadic shepherds camp in summer. It is in the foothills of the Kralamarg mountain. Wattadâr is also on the best traditional route from the Valley to the Toshâ Maidân pass.

### References

Quoted in *A Gazetteer of Kashmir* by Charles Ellison Bates, p.168.







**Everything  
(almost)**







## Scared Tourists and a Scarred Heritage

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In the spring of 1999, tourists flocked to Kashmîr in a way that they had not in the last ten years, when militancy began. That April there were days when there was not a single hotel or houseboat bed to be had anywhere in Srinagar. Some tourists who landed up without reservations had to spend the night in a park close to the Dal Lake.

I was the Tourism Secretary of the state at the time. At least one TV channel found fault with my department for not having provided enough beds to cope with the sudden rush of tourists.

The Kargil war changed everything.

In May 1999, war broke out in parts of Kargil and Leh (both in the Ladâkh region). In the previous winter, Pākistân had occupied several hundred kilometres of unguarded territory.

Kargil is in Ladâkh and not in the Valley of Kashmîr. It is a nine or ten-hour drive from Srinagar. There's a very tall mountain range between the two of them. If, God forbid, a bomb is dropped in one of these two regions, the sheer distance and the huge mountains between the two will prevent the radiation from reaching the other region.

But try telling the tourists that. Like Tom Clancy in the incredibly shoddily researched *Line of Control* they assumed that Kargil was close to Srinagar. (Shame on Clancy, though. Can't he afford a couple of researchers?) The Srinagar airport was closed to civilian traffic for a few days when the war began. This reinforced the tourists' view. (I am still not going to let Clancy off the hook. He should have at least looked at a decent atlas.)

Overnight, tourists began to trickle out of Kashmîr, even though the situation in the Valley was as peaceful as it had been in the three preceding years.

The point is that tourists are a sensitive lot. They react not to the reality but what they *think* the reality is.



*The fluctuating fortunes of Kashmir's tourism*

In the late 1980s, one of India's best known private sector consultants estimated that twenty-five percent of the economy of Srinagar city and a fifth of Kashmir's economy depended on tourism.<sup>1</sup>

1988 is the best year that Kashmir's tourism industry has ever had. That year Kashmir received 7.22 lakh (0.72 million) tourists. The next year militancy started in a small way. Tourists from the rest of India started cancelling their reservations. Tourists arrivals that year plummeted to 5.58 lakh (0.55 million).

And yet in 1989, more international tourists visited Kashmir than ever before or after: sixtyseven thousand of them. Why were their reactions different from those of Indian tourists? Again it was a matter of how the reality was perceived.

Indian tourists received information about the happenings in Kashmir immediately, and quickly changed their travel plans. The international tourist plans a year in advance, and also receives bad news about the place to be visited much after the domestic tourist does.

The same is true of good news. By 1996, the situation in Kashmir started changing for the better. Local tourists (i.e. Kashmiris going to Gulmarg, Pahalgâm and the Mughal gardens) were the first to respond. October 1996 saw unprecedented crowds of local tourists everywhere. (Incidentally, 'local tourists' were an insignificant category before militancy began in 1989. Perhaps being cooped up inside for a decade has resulted in this change. By the year 2004, there were between twentyfive and thirtyfive thousand local tourists each in Gulmarg and Pahalgâm every Saturday, and a similar figure every Sunday.)

Domestic Indian tourists started coming in the second half of 1998 (after a major press campaign authored by us). International tourists were the last to be convinced that Kashmir was a safe place to visit.

Incidentally, international tourists have never accounted for more than nine per cent of the total tourist arrivals in Kashmir in any normal year: nor less than eight per cent.

*1990-1997: The decimation of tourism*

Actually, 'decimation' doesn't even begin to describe what happened to Kashmir tourism between 1990 and 1997. 'Decimation' means 'to reduce by one-tenth.' Even if it had meant 'to reduce to a tenth of the original' (and it does not) it would still be inadequate.

<sup>1</sup> When tourism collapsed in 1990, the economies of Srinagar and Kashmir did not contract by a quarter or a fifth respectively. My own estimate is that in 1988, the last normal year, tourism accounted for 11 and 9 percent of these two economies.



By 1990, full-fledged militancy started in Kashmir. That year a little more than ten thousand tourists came to Kashmir. The fall, compared to the previous year's already depleted figure, was by 98 percent. Things remained that way till 1997 when there were sixteen thousand tourists.

Now, 1997 saw very little violence. But still the tourist was reluctant to come. That's because he did not know that things had changed in Kashmir. Indeed, they had started changing by 1994, when grenade attacks in the heart of the city more or less came to an end. That year Sopore ceased to be a bastion of the militants. By 1995, things had improved so much that the next year it was possible to hold fairly peaceful elections. But the tourist did not know that. So he stayed away.

#### *1998-2004: Revival, fall and revival again*

A friend and I were sitting in an ice-cream shop near the Dal Lake. The shop also doubled as a phone booth. This was in October 1998, and a young Bengali couple was calling home. My Bengali isn't too good (despite my being addicted to Bengal's art cinema) but I could make out that the couple was telling their family that they were in Jalandhar (Punjab).

I went over, introduced myself as the state's Tourism Secretary, and asked them about the Jalandhar bit. They laughed and told me that their family would kill them if they knew that they were in Kashmir.

Still, the couple was part of a trend. There was a major upswing in 1998. That year 1.1 lakh (a hundred and ten thousand) tourists came a-visiting.

I don't believe in paid advertising. Like David Ogilvy I believe that an inch of editorial endorsement is worth more than a thousand inches of paid advertisements. In mid-1998, we launched a huge press campaign. This included taking two journalists, including one from India's biggest news agency, for a midnight trip of Srinagar's monuments, to show them how safe Srinagar was even at night. The news agency gave us a huge write-up. So did every major publication and TV channel.

Most important, I invited the tourist trade of J&K Tourism's star performer, Katra, to Srinagar and got them to meet their counterparts in Kashmir. My message to Katra was simple: send us tourists and you will not go unrewarded. I had already sat down with those who owned hotels, houseboats, *shikaras* (boats) and ponies in Kashmir, and worked out discounts of between thirty and sixty percent. As a result the tourist would pay less than normal even after we had paid our brethren in Katra a small commission. It was win-win for everyone.

The tourists started pouring in. Exactly 86 percent of them came through Katra.



Despite the Kargil war we managed to get twice as many tourists (2.17 lakh/ 0.21 million) the next year, most of them before May. To this day this remains the highest figure achieved after the onset of militancy. Had that war not taken place, at the rate at which we were going, we would certainly have exceeded the highest-ever figure by leaps and bounds.

In fact, had militancy not happened, by 2003, Kashmir would have been receiving twenty lakh (two million) tourists every year: a tenth of them being from abroad. (This estimate is based on a model that factors in India's economic boom of the 1990s and the sharp rise in pilgrim traffic to Katra as well as Sri Amarn  th j  .)

In any case, Kargil happened and once again tourists started assuming the worst of Kashmir. Arrivals started dipping again, though this time not as badly as in the early '90s.

Then came 2003. The government launched a huge campaign all over India to reassure tourists: and filmmakers (once the mainstay of Kashmir's tourist economy). Once again the tourist began to *think* of Kashmir as safe enough to visit.

The results were immediate. By the first week of July 2003, around ninety thousand tourists had visited Kashmir, raising hopes of a repeat of 1999.

### *The economics and sociology of tourist behaviour*

Just ignore the subtitle if you find it dense. If you've actually read this book so far you might have discovered that you can trust me not to be pedantic. But I do have some theories about what that subtitle hints at.

I used to know a person, a Bombayite, who edited India's most respected film magazine. I was then the head of the district administration of Jamm  . I met him at a film festival in Bangalore in 1991. He wrote in his column that I had taken a break from my work in Jamm   to get away from militancy.

The next day I protested that there was no militancy in Jamm  . I added that the state's winter capital was as peaceful as Delhi or Bombay. He refused to believe me. So I invited him over to be my guest in Jamm   and see things for himself.

He said, 'But I'll still have to get down at Srinagar airport and then drive all the way to Jamm  . I could be attacked during the drive.'<sup>2</sup>

2 Non-Indian readers, not familiar with the geography of the state, might not get the joke. Jamm  , like Kargil, is an entire day's drive away from Kashmir. A tall range of mountains stands between Jamm   province and Kashmir. Jamm   has its own airport. Besides, it is as free of militancy as, say, Delhi.



When I told journalist Sunil Sethi about this incident, he quoted from author M.J. Akbar, 'Bombay needs to re-establish diplomatic links with India.'

My friend the editor was an extreme example. But other elite types were not much better, even though they knew where Jammû was. These were people who had grown up with me, had attended expensive private schools and India's toniest college, had great academic scores and now held the highest paid jobs.

All of them tended to generalise about the state. They assumed that if there was a war on in Kargil, some of the bullets might stray into Kashmîr as well. And if there was militancy in Kashmîr, it must be there in Jammû, too. Therefore, all of them refused to visit Jammû in the 1990s. (The joke in the state about such tourists is that they reach for their woollens the minute they reach boiling Jammû, because it is snowing in distant Kashmîr.)

So, what's the point that I am trying to make?

It is that in the same 1990s, Jammû tourism grew by an incredible twenty percent (or more) a year.

What explains this contradiction?

Class and exposure to the media does. The people who thronged Jammû in the 1990s (and beyond) were mostly did well to do shopkeepers and middling businessmen. They earned more than my friends in salaried jobs, no matter how well paid. But they hadn't been to fancy schools and colleges. They did not speak good English. They didn't read profound newspapers or magazines. They probably didn't read anything at all. As a result they tended not to generalise. They got their information not from the media but from people who had just returned from Jammû.

Exactly the same is true of tourists going to Kashmîr, Ladâkh or anywhere else. My brother-in-law, an outstanding American academic with an American Ph.D., tried to discourage me from travelling in Guatemala and the Honduras because there was a problem in El Salvador. (For the record: I came back alive.) Others dissuaded me from applying for a British Commonwealth assignment in Colombo because of the situation in distant Jaffna.

The media is not to blame. They faithfully report, 'Three killed in encounter in Shopian.' The generalisation takes place in the reader's mind. He doesn't know how far Shopian is from the tourist resorts of Kashmîr. He notices a Srinagar dateline in the report and drops his plans to visit Kashmîr (or Egypt, because of a war in Iraq).

Class is another factor that influences tourist behaviour. The rich are less likely to visit a place associated with violence than the not so well-to-do. Kashmîr's tourist boom of 1999 initially consisted mainly of middle income tourists. The rich followed. The same happened with the pilgrimages of Sri



Mâtâ Vaishno Devi jî and Sî Amarnâth jî. The lower middle income groups were followed by middle income groups followed by the rich. Professionals and intellectuals were the last to come.

*'But how safe are the tourist resorts of Kashmîr?'* I have attempted to answer this question in the 'Appendix' to this book.

## A scarred heritage

### *The generalists*

Every month we have an official meeting in a heritage conference room in Bâdâmi Bâgh. This is the picturesque cantonment that the Dogrâ Mahârâjâs had got constructed on the Zaberwan mountains, next to Srinagar. The first time that I went to this room I was stunned by its *khatambañd* ceiling, ordered by one of the Mahârâjâs for his generals. It was the most tasteful and elegant *khatambañd* I had ever seen. Quite frankly, I envied the building's present occupants.

But I had no reason to. The same Mahârâjâs had got constructed the office that I now occupy, for the then Governor of Kashmîr. (The post was renamed 'Divisional Commissioner of Kashmîr' in the 1950s.) I suspect that even the architects and craftsmen were the same. For when I got my own office room restored I noticed that it had exactly the same ceiling. Except that the ceiling looked neither tasteful nor elegant. In fact, it was barely visible. Some genius had smeared it all with white plastic emulsion paint.

So, are the present occupants of Bâdâmi Bâgh looking after their inheritance in a way that we civilians are not?

Two years ago I was in Central Europe on one of my research vacations. At Kiev, I was awe-struck by the stonework of their heritage buildings. Now, all cubes of stone have six sides. The public can see only one of them. The other five sides are buried inside the building, covered by other similar stones. Kashmîrî architecture, from Awantipur and Mârtañd to Khânqâh-é-Mu'allâ and the Dogrâ buildings, uses plenty of stone cubes. The Kashmîrîs use a very tough, locally available, grey stone called *dévrî*, which is almost as expensive as marble. It is so hard that it lasts for centuries, if not millennia.

The Kiev stone cubes were superior in two respects. They were several times bigger than the stone-cubes used in Dogrâ palaces and offices. I attributed this to the Olympic gold winning muscles of the Ukrainians.

More important, the side exposed to the public was not flat. It was a rough convex instead. This side of each slab had been carefully chiselled to give the appearance of having been left in its natural state.



After I returned to Srinagar, my father fell ill and I had to spend a lot of time in the Bâdâmi Bâgh hospital. I noticed there that the Dogrâ-era stone pillars were made of exactly the same kind of stone-cubes as in Kiev, except that the cubes were smaller. (Makes sense, considering that we can't win even bronze medals.) However, some bright person had given those priceless stones a neat whitewash. It's like whitewashing marble.

Were the Dogrâs partial towards Bâdâmi Bâgh? Not at all. The walls of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Old Secretariat complex in Srinagar have the same kind of stones, though in a bonsai version. The side facing the public has been left a rough convex even here. If only we could see the stones through the coat of 1990s whitewash.

But then the boundary walls of the Grand Palace Hotel (formerly the Oberoi Palace), made of expensive stone, have also been whitewashed.

The conclusion so far, I suppose, is that heritage buildings are too precious to be left to the generalists. This is work best done by the experts.

Or maybe I should simply give up and stop complaining.

#### *The experts*

In 1999, I had gone to Srinagar's Pari Mahal with some guests. I was horrified to find the 'experts' smearing cement on this 17<sup>th</sup> century Mughal building. The story of this particular battle with the 'experts' is a long one, maybe best told in a footnote in my memoirs. Briefly, the second highest authority in that 'technical' department said, 'What is Parvez getting so upset about? We will first reinforce the Pari Mahal by coating it with cement. Then we will paint the cement a nice pink, to look like the original.'

Local television got to know of my efforts to get the cement removed. They reached the spot and tried to embarrass me into saying something nasty about the 'experts.' We in the government have a rule that we don't criticise sister departments in public. Certainly not through the media. I tried to parry the television crew's questions. I was in an awkward position. I couldn't condemn the coat of cement and I couldn't support it.

I tried to hide my bitterness by joking about how the Mughals didn't know the first thing about architecture, so we were trying to improve their building. The Mughals might be considered the greatest builders that the Indian sub-continent has ever known, I said, but they hadn't been to engineering schools. Nor had they heard of modern building materials like cement. I kept trying to suppress my pain as I watched the vandalism of a much-loved building.

My friends who saw the show tell me that the camera zoomed to my eyes, which were moist to the brim.

Grown men don't cry. I don't either. But what we are doing to our heritage is reason enough to.



By now you might have jumped to the conclusion that government agencies can't be trusted with the heritage.

*Annual maintenance grants*

I wish that private organisations (and individuals) were any better. And this has nothing to do with Kashmir or militancy. This is true of all of India. My theory is that the disowning of our heritage began some time after 1947. The first were those hideous cement temples that an industrial house built (and named after itself) in the middle of the twentieth century. The mosques of western Uttar Pradesh, with bathroom tiles on the outer walls, followed in the 1970s. Around the same time the Kashmiris stopped building mosques and *ziârats* (shrines) in the Kashmirî-Lûristâni style. The Sikh gurudwârâs were the last to succumb.

Give little brats crayons and they'll muck up the walls, fortunately of their own homes. Give older brats a spray can and the whole neighbourhood is their canvas. Give young lovers a sharp nail and a monument and they'll carve their undying love for each other on its walls.

Give India's junior level government engineers (and the managing committees of India's religious shrines) a monument and funds and soon they'll start making their little 'improvements.' Kerbstones made of priceless *dévrî* everywhere in Kashmir, especially on stately Gupkar, have been painted with zebra stripes. Obviously some engineers and contractors had funds to spare, and did not want any part of the budget to remain unspent during that financial year<sup>3</sup>. The *dévrî* wall of Srinagar's heritage Nehru Guest House was given a neat coat of paint despite my oral pleas to the technical guys doing it.

Let these 'technical experts' loose near the Taj Mahal and they'll start adding flourishes to its marble that Shah Jehan couldn't have dreamt of. And I am not joking.

Some time ago, the authorities decided to charge a small entrance fee from all those who want to enter the Mughal gardens of Srinagar. An excellent decision. Now, obviously a ticket-counter had to be created, with a window through which a clerk would receive the money and hand out tickets. The experts who were given this task decided that the best way to

3 Their personal coffers are enriched in direct proportion to how successful they are in spending their annual departmental budget. Building roads in remote Guréz, Tañgdâr, Shopiâñ or Kupwârâ is too much like work. So let's paint up some heritage wall in the middle of Srinagar instead. Better still, let us smear whitewash on those silly 19th century paintings on the walls of the Purmandal (Jammû) temple complex (to take an actual example, in case I have given the impression that this disease is limited to Kashmir).



make a ticket-window was to drill a hole through the 17<sup>th</sup> century outer wall of the Nishât Garden. This lot would have drilled a hole through the Taj Mahal to create a ticket-window. In the event, the four-hundred-year old wall of the Nishât couldn't take the drilling. A wide section of it simply collapsed.

Actually it is pointless to shed tears for that mongrel wall. Each time that it was repaired the experts in charge reconstructed it with whatever materials they fancied: modern bricks, irregular stones, cement, whatever. Never mind if it clashed with the original. You can hate me for saying what I am about to, but between 1999 and 2001 my team re-did a huge section of this wall. But we used exactly the same sun-baked *mahârâji* bricks as the original. Those bricks ceased to be made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. So we cannibalised them from the remains of old ruined buildings in downtown Srinagar.

Inside the Mughal gardens things are no different. Regardless of whether it is the Nishât, the Shalimâr or Bijbehârâ, the mediæval stone fountains have been replaced with cement ones. Ditto for paths and water channels that were originally made of stone. There are ugly rumours about whose houses the stone originals are adorning today.

The vandalism at the Bijbehârâ gardens is so acute that few Kashmiris (leave alone others) even know that there are Mughal gardens in that town. Around the 1980s, water stopped flowing in the channels and fountains there. Farmers living upstream diverted it all to their fields. Their population had more than doubled, so they needed the water.

But what about the experts who decided that they could improve on what the 18<sup>th</sup> century Mughal prince Dârâ Shikoh had built? Obviously, they did what all modern experts have to do. They replaced expensive and long-lasting antique stone with cheap and ephemeral cement everywhere. But what they did to the central tank shows that they had skipped classes the day their teacher had taught their class about water and its level.

The 'Dârâ Shikoh Mughal garden' at Bijbehârâ is built in the 'four-square' pattern made famous by some cancer-stick manufacturers. Right in the centre, where the crosshairs meet, is a tank. The 'crosshairs' of this garden are water channels, which radiate in the four directions. One of them carries water into the central tank, and the other three take the water out.

Originally the central tank was exactly as deep as the four channels. In the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century some technical experts made the tank twice as deep. Now what happens is that the water of the upper half keeps flowing out, while that of the lower half stagnates, breeding all kinds of undesirable organisms.



In addition, these experts have created weird cement structures, roughly one and a half feet high and maybe four feet square, at various places in that heritage garden. These are either large planters or picnic platforms. Or maybe the experts wanted to create mysteries of the Stonehenge-kind. (Asterix: "Hey, Obelix! What on earth are those yon menhirs meant for?" Obelix: "For exactly the same purpose as the cement platforms in Bijbehâra.")

To top it all, some experts have built a gardener's shed in the middle of the garden, perhaps because the garden needed some uglification. Keeping it company is another shed. This one houses an electric transformer.

I am a lowly generalist. I don't know much about technical things, but I would have built those two sheds in some obscure corner of the garden, if not just outside it.

#### *The managers of religious shrines*

The 5<sup>th</sup> century stone temple at Boniyâr is one of the oldest in the state. Its various keepers have jazzed it up with all kinds of embellishments. (See the chapter on 'Bârâmulâ.') The temple at Bârâmulâ proper has similarly been 'improved' with modern materials, which have no business to be in that temple. The hilltop Shankarachârya temple in Srinagar, too, has been improved with non-traditional materials.

The shrine of Sri Amarnâth jî is one of the holiest in all Hîndûdom. It has a naturally formed ice-*liṅgam*, which starts melting in late July. Some well-meaning people have laid neat slabs of marble on the platform on which the ice-*liṅgam* forms. Marble is a central Indian material, not used in traditional Kashmîrî architecture, Hîndû or Muslim. Aesthetics apart, a body of opinion feels that the *liṅgam* might melt several weeks later if allowed to form on natural stones and earth as in the past. These have now been covered with marble. And marble retains heat.

As you might have noticed earlier in this book, in 2001 we discovered an ancient cave temple of Lord Shiv. It has idols of the Lords Shiv and Ganesh. After all these centuries the features of these two idols have been eroded considerably. One has to gaze very hard in that dimly lit cave to see the features at all. Some people, who have no business to meddle in religion, have painted both idols, as well as the grey *liṅgams* next to them, with saffron paint. (The same people have installed all kinds of idols and huge metal bells, the vibrations of which hasten the melting of the ice-*liṅgam*, at Sri Amarnâth jî, which should best be left in its natural state. They have brazenly written the names of their outfits on these idols and bells.)

I have been to the Boniyâr and Bârâmulâ temples only once each, and the newly discovered cave temple twice. But I go to the shrines of Srinagar city several times every year. And it is about the 'modernisation' of these shrines that I want to share my pain with you, in the hope that you might



understand. So far I have been able to convince only two groups of people; the Sheikhs of Raj Bagh and two senior civil engineers.

The Khânqâh-é-Mu'allâ is a dazzling exposition of Kashmir's incredible variety of handicrafts: from carved (and polished) *dévrî* stones to filigreed wood, from brass work and chandeliers<sup>4</sup> to calligraphy and *khatambâñd*. The door jambs consists of almost ten tiny levels, an art that has now vanished. Above all, it is a living museum of Kashmiri *papiér mâchè*. In a word, the architecture of this shrine is the pride of Kashmir.

In 2001, some experts decided to enclose the open corridor of the upper floor, the one that the public can see from a great distance across the river. They enclosed it with European windows. I mentioned this to the keepers of the shrine who very graciously asked me to suggest how to set it right. I hope I am able to.

The shrine and mosque of Naqshbañd Sâheb is said to be one of the best places in all Kashmir to see lattice work (*zâli-pinjra*) at. When I went there in July 2003 I found that the windows of the Friday Mosque had all been replaced with neat geometric designs. These Western motifs were used in the architecture of the elite educational institutes of Ahmedabad (Gujarat) in the 1960s. They have nothing to do with Kashmiri or Islâmic architecture.

Now, stand in front of the entrance of the shrine. On your immediate right you will find an elegantly filigreed green wooden window of the kind that the Naqshbañd Sâheb shrine is famous for. However, on the left are three 'modern' glass windows in the gothic style that post-1970 Kashmiri architects have confused with the Islâmic *mehrab* (arch).

Something similar has been happening at the Jâmâ Masjid of Srinagar in the new millennium. A tin roof had replaced its traditional *burzâ* (natural foliage) roof, perhaps in the 1970s. But at least the tin was painted a nice Islâmic green, or left in its natural, inoffensive, silver colour. Around 1998, someone painted it red. I pleaded with its management against this.

Then in 2002, the elegant open, arched doorways were covered with glass. This was done to keep the pigeons out. Aesthetically, the result was not unpleasant. However, I have two problems. Firstly, this mosque, first built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by engineers from Lûristân (Irân) and Khurâsân has now begun to look like a 20<sup>th</sup> century American church, with a crucifix in the middle of the panes. More importantly, shouldn't all repairs conform to the original?

That's how it is done in the Western world and in the affluent parts of West, Central and East Asia.

<sup>4</sup> The chandeliers alone are of non-Kashmiri origin.



Srinagar's J  m   Masjid is easily the grandest extant monument in all Kashmir. That is because of its tall, dignified timber columns. Whether it is the J  m   Masjid, Naqshba  nd S  heb, the Kh  nq  h-  -Mu'all   or Aish Muq  m (near Pahalg  m), the timber is always left in its natural state. This is what gives it its beauty, its elegance, its distinctively Kashmiri character.

However, wood is also prone to attack from all kinds of pests. So, in 2003, well-meaning members of the J  m   Masjid management painted these timber columns, as well as the awesome timber ceiling, a muddy-brown. What inspires awe about those pillars is that each of them is made of a single tree. Every column is seamless. The muddy-brown paint not only tampers with the mosque's original architecture, it also takes away its majesty by concealing the grain of the timber.

So, is there no solution? Dilsh  d Sheikh, a wood-and interior design-expert, has suggested an invisible 'woodguard,' which protects wood without changing its colour.

*What right have I to interfere?*

Often when I make these suggestions I fear that my intentions might be misunderstood. After all, as a Delhiite and a government servant perhaps I have no business to interfere, no *locus standi*. The managements of the J  m   Masjid and the Kh  nq  h    Mu'all   have been extremely sweet and understanding. They have allowed me to make changes at and near their venerable shrines in the manner that I think comes closest to the original.

However, in two other cases things were not so good.

The Mughal gardens of Srinagar are owned and managed by the Tourism and Floriculture Department, of which I was the Commissioner. In the year 2000, I had gone to the Nishat and Shalimar with Mr. Mohd. Amin, the then Director, Floriculture. We found that the beautiful old wooden shrine on the uppermost terrace had been converted into a brick structure. A second storey was being added, and the shrine had encroached considerably on the garden. All three changes were a violation of the rules. On our pointing this out to the management of the shrine we were told that 'rivers of blood would flow' if the government made any attempt to enforce the law by removing the encroachment.

I had faced a similar situation with the illegal temple opposite the Jamm   Railway Station and an illegal gurudw  r   in Jamm  's Gandhi Nagar. So we simply informed the then district administration in writing and decided to leave well alone.

At Tsr  r (Chr  r)-  -Sharief the disagreement was only about architecture. The shrine complex had been set on fire in 1995, so it needed to be rebuilt. After the main shrine was rebuilt in the modern style in 2001, I volunteered



to oversee the construction of the second phase to ensure that it adhered to the traditional Kashmîrî-Lûristâni style. The government agreed to appoint me the head of the committee that was overseeing the reconstruction. However, some private members on the committee argued that the second part of the shrine, too, should be built in the 20<sup>th</sup> century 'PWD (public works department) style.' Naturally, I disagreed.

The private members felt that my insistence on traditional Kashmîrî architecture amounted to 'interference in religious matters.' That did it. I quickly resigned from the committee.

It is a losing battle. At Trâl (Pulwâmâ) I put my heart, soul and enormous time into the reconstruction of the Khânqâh-é-Faiz Panâh. I could not succeed in convincing the local residents that the shrine be rebuilt to look like its wood and papiér mâchè precursor. However, at least all of us concurred on its overall layout. We also agreed that we would use plenty of *dévri* stone.

Two years ago I visited an exquisite mediæval palace in Warsaw. That isn't a big deal, except that only a few hours before we'd seen a documentary film about how that part of Warsaw had been razed to the ground during the Second World War. So, how did this palace survive, I asked. It didn't, the guide explained. What we see today was rebuilt in the 1970s, brick by brick, exactly to the original specifications.

Ah, I can hear some readers groan, Parvez Dewan and his European ideas.

No. This attitude towards reconstruction has nothing to do with Europe. All civilised people do the same. Above all, this is a very Kashmîrî attitude. If only we in the modern generation knew.

The Jâmâ Masjid of Srînagar has been destroyed by fire several times. The version that we see today was built between 1674 and 1677. Emperor Aurangzeb asked for the plans of the 14<sup>th</sup> century original to be obtained. After that it was ensured that every brick, every pillar of the new mosque adhered to the original plan.

So we don't have to learn from Warsaw considering that Kashmîr's own traditions are so well defined.

Middle-eastern towns are so proud of their mediæval city walls. Few residents of Srînagar have ever seen the splendid city walls of their own town. Nor has anyone below the age of 35 ever seen Srînagar's majestic Patther Masjid. In both cases encroachers (squatters) are to blame. All we need do is to remove those illegal encroachments and these two masterpieces will become visible again.

The battle is also being lost at private heritage residences. People want to pull down their world class wooden balconies. These jut out into the air



above the river without any brackets to support them. Twenty people can sit on those balconies at a time, without the fear that the balconies might collapse and fall into the river. What a tribute to the strength of the timber used. What a compliment to the craftsmen who built those balconies.

Everywhere in Kashmîr these heritage residences, made of wood and sturdy, thin, sun-baked bricks, are being replaced by 'modern' houses. One of my favourite such houses used to have a white exterior. It has since been painted pink. On the day that I wrote these words another heritage white house was painted a pale blue.

My favourite 'pension' in Prague has a rundown heritage look outside, as is required by Czech laws. Inside it is smart and modern.

I am making a feeble attempt to stem the tide. I believe that there are at least a hundred and fifty heritage residences in Srinagar city alone. I have been trying to catalogue them in a personal capacity. I have also put circular blue plaques on some of them, an idea that I picked up in London.

The cover of this book is another attempt in that direction. It is made up not of photographs of monuments as they are, but of paintings of Char-é-Sharief and the Khânqâh-é-Mu'allâ as they used to be. As I wish they were even today. As I, and many others who love Kashmîr's rich culture, would always like to remember them.<sup>5</sup>

*Postscript:* Incidentally, about our muscles vs. those of Ukrainian stone workers. I needn't have developed that complex. After I wrote this chapter I went to Nârâ Nâg (Wânâgat, Srinagar district). The stone slabs used in the temples there were considerably bigger than those in Kiev. In fact, the slabs at Nârâ Nâg suggest a Pyramids-style mystery. How did the workers carry those slabs?



## Appendix

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### **Kashmîr: Frequently asked questions**

(Note: While efforts have been made to update information to January 2004, all telephone numbers, tariffs/ rates/ fares, timings and even the availability of facilities mentioned in this chapter, indeed in this book, are subject to change.)

#### ***How safe is Kashmîr?***

In 1989, militancy erupted in Kashmîr.

Even at the height of militancy there were no 'militancy-related incidents' in Sonamarg or Gulmarg. Once when I said this at a meeting, hotel owners from Pahalgâm protested. They pointed out that there hadn't been a single violent incident at Pahalgâm either. I stood corrected. Aru, where one solitary incident (a kidnapping) had taken place as far back as in 1995 wasn't the same as Pahalgâm. However, there have been attacks on the annual Srî Amarnâth jî Yâtrâ (pilgrimage).

Before 1989, murders and thefts were almost unknown in Kashmîr. In the summers pickpockets and expensive call girls would trickle in with the tourists, mainly to service them. Even in 2004, there is perhaps not a single local pickpocket anywhere in the state.

Prostitution was banned in the state early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Every five years or so we read in the papers that 'a vice ring' has been 'busted'. However, by and large there is no prostitution in the state. There definitely is no red light area. (Before the ban, Maisuma Bazar in Srînagar and the Urdu Bazar-now Rajinder Bazar-of Jammû had some brothels.)

Almost all middle-class and low-income Kashmîris are teetotalers. In the upper income groups, too, very few people drink, and that in the privacy of homes, their own or their friends'. So you won't find people drunk on the streets.



'Eve teasing' was, and is, unknown in Kashmir. Till 1989, groups of women, decked in gold, would come home from weddings well past midnight, unescorted by men. That someone might molest them or steal their gold was a thought that would not even cross their mind.

Things have changed because of militancy, but only slightly. The killings, mostly in the remoter villagers are, of course, a reality. However, their incidence is not much higher than in several Indian states that are otherwise 'normal' and free of militancy. Crimes not related to militancy are still rare.

As a Delhiite I can not help noticing the crime statistics that appear in the Delhi press. Whether it is Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, many international capitals or Kashmir, there is always a small chance that one will meet with some violence. Since 1989, there have been only four incidents where tourists have been affected: not counting the aforementioned attacks on the Sri Amarn  th ji Y  tr  .

By and large tourists should have no cause for fear when they travel in Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalg  m and Sonmarg, as well as on the roads between these four resorts and on the national highway. Personally, I have been trekking in the mountains of Kashmir without any 'personal security' (i.e. without a weapon or a bodyguard). However, the government will not encourage trekking in Kashmir and Doda till the law and order situation gets even better.

#### *Availability of tourist bungalows in the smaller towns of Kashmir and Doda*

In the 1990s, many tourist bungalows and cafeterias were shut down. Some were burnt, while others simply went bad due to almost a decade of disuse. By the time of writing this book, tourist infrastructure had been restored *only* in Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalg  m and Sonamarg, and, to a lesser extent, at places like Qazigund. Yusmarg is an excellent place for day-trips. Therefore, you won't notice the condition of the once-grand tourist village there.

So, please check the availability, even existence, of accommodation at resorts other than the four mentioned above, before planning or spending the night at the lesser known resorts. You will get this information at the TRCs (Tourist Reception Centres) of Srinagar and Jammu.

#### *Disruption of some training facilities*

Due to militancy some institutes in Kashmir that trained people in mountaineering, skiing etc., either closed shop or shifted to places like Batote (Jammu). Therefore, if you find cautious phrases like 'skiing lessons are *normally/ supposed to be* available' that's what's being alluded to.



## Tourist resorts: Altitudes

Place	Mtrs.
Achabal	1640
Ânañtnâg/ Islâmbad	1597
Banihâl (Jammû)	1832
Bârâmmullâ	1500
Bijbehera	1590
Doda (Jammû)	1500
Drass (Ladâkh)	3230
Ganderbal	1500
Gulmarg	2671
Hañdwârâ	1596
Kargil (Ladâkh)	2740
Kishtwâr (Jammû)	1580
Leh (Ladâkh)	3522
Padam (Ladâkh)	3657
Pahalgâm	2134
Qazigund	1673
Shopiân	1660
Sogam	1500
Sonamarg	2470
Sopore	1500
Srînagar	1593
Tangdâr	1575
Tangmarg	2537
Titwal	1500
Urî	1237

The important towns of Kashmîr:  
Population

The town	Population, 2001
Achâbal	5,835
Ânañtnâg	63,437
Awantîporâ	6,250
Bâñdîporâ	25,714
Bârâmmullâ	61,941
Beerwâh	5,515
Bijbehârâ	19,703
Budgâm	15,932
Dorû-Verînâg	16,727
Gâñderbal	13,944
Gulmarg	664
Hâjan	9,916
Handwârâ	10,624
Khân Sâheb	2,038
Khrew	7,208
Kokarnâg	4,858
Kulgâm	13,523
Kunzar	1,901
Kupwârâ	14,711
Mâgâm	4,306
Mattan	6,367
Pahalgâm	5,922
Pâmpore	16,595
Pattan	11,409
Pulwâmâ	15,521
Qâzîguñd	4,307
Shopiân	12,396
Sopore	53,246
Srînagar	8,94,940*
Srînagar Cantt.	13,477
Sumbal	10,757
Trâl	11,607
Tsrâr (Chrâr) e Sharief	7,378
Urî	5,256





\*Srinagar City has expanded into Budgâm district in particular. Its total population in 2004 was around 12 lakh (1.2 million).

*Excursions within Kashmîr: the four main directions and routes*

The Valley of Kashmîr consists of accessible resorts as well as distant mountains. You might consider doing the resorts in clusters, arranged according to the route that they lie on. Srinagar is almost at the centre of the Valley. Roads radiate in all directions from Srinagar, thus:

- i) South: Pahalgâm, Mattan, Martand, Qazigund, Pampore, Jammû.
- ii) Northwest: Gulmarg, Bâramullâ, Kupwârâ, Sopore, Guréz, Tangdar.
- iii) Northeast: Kheer Bhawani, Manasbal, Sonamarg, Bâltal, Leh, Kargil.
- iv) Southwest: Yusmarg, Tsrar-e-Sharief.

The places listed above do not occur in the order mentioned.

The excursions favoured most by Indian tourists are given below. Bus services and taxis are geared to these circuits in particular. International travellers have never accounted for more than 9% of all tourists in Kashmîr. However, they tend to go off the beaten track as well. The whole purpose of this book is to encourage tourists to visit more than just the **popular excursions**, which are:

- i) Srinagar to Gulmarg (day return or night halt)
- ii) Srinagar to Pahalgâm and nearby resorts (day return or night halt)
- iii) Srinagar to Sonamarg (day return or night halt)
- iv) Srinagar to Daksum (via Achhabal and Kokernag) (and back the same day, till the accommodation there is renovated)
- v) Srinagar to Wular Lake and back the same day
- vi) Srinagar to Yusmarg (and back the same day, till the accommodation there is renovated)
- vii) Within Srinagar: *Day One*: The Mughal Gardens (Nishat, Shalimar and, if you obtain permission, Cheshma Shahi and Pari Mahal), the Dal-Nageen Lakes and the Shankarâchârya temple. *Day Two*: Jâmâ Masjid, Shâh-é-Hamadân, Makhdoom Sâheb, Shârikâ Devi, Chhattî Pâdshâhî Gurûdwârâ, Dastgîr Sâheb, Patthar Masjid, Budshah's mother's tomb, Hazratbal.

**i) In the direction of Pahalgâm, Qazigund (and Jammû)**

If you travel south from Srinagar, on the national highway, in the direction of Jammû you could cover: Pâmpore, Avantipore, Ânañtnâg, Achâbal, Kokernag, Daksum, Mârtañd and Vérînâg. These places are on or to the right of the highway. By making short detours you can also do Panzath and Doru.



### **Srinagar to Ānañtnāg and then Pahalgām**

From Ānañtnāg you can also go to Aish Muqām, Seer Hamadān, Mattan and, finally, Pahalgām and Aru. (Routes i and i-a cover the Ānañtnāg and Pulwāmā districts.)

Since the 1980s, Seer Hamadan has become famous for a holy relic of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), that is now displayed every year on the occasions of the Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi and the Shab-e-Meraj. Seer is right on the main road. As a result thousands of local people as well as tourists going to Pahalgām pay homage. A shrine is being built to house the relic (a footprint of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) on a black stone).

How do you get to the highway from your hotel/ houseboat? Can you see the hilltop Shankarāchārya temple? Of course, you can. At its feet there's a tri-junction. If Jan Baker's and the petrol station are on your left and the Dal Lake behind you, then the road in front of you will lead straight first to Broadway Cinema and then to the saffron fields of Pāmpore, then Awantiporā and so on all the way to Jammū and Delhi.

### **From Srinagar to the Khānabal crossing**

(All distances are in kilometres.)

0	0	Srinagar (Lāl Chowk tower)
1.8	1.8	Srinagar (TRC/Radio Kashmir/ bridge crossing)
0.9	2.7	Srinagar (Sonawar Chowk: the road from Lāl Chowk comes to an end and merges with the highway. Turn right to go to Pahalgām/ Jammū)
1.3	4	Broadway cinema is on the right.
3.7	7.7	Athwajan (Bang on the roadside, on a 10' hillock on the left, are graves. Legendary Kashmiri poets are certainly buried here. Some claim that one of the graves here is that of Habba Khatoon.)
0.8	8.5	Panthachok (the road on the right at this point goes to the airport)
2.2	10.7	Semporā chowk (the road on the left goes to Khrew)
2.6	13.3	Pāmpore chowk (the road on the left goes to Khrew from here, too). See 'Pulwāmā' district.
3.5	16.8	The Central Sericulture Research Institute, Pampore, is on the left. (Distances mentioned for this entry, and the next two entries, are approximate.)
0.5	17.3	There is a country road on the left. It leads to Galandar, a palæolithic site where elephant fossils have been found.

Contd.



Contd.

- |     |      |   |
|-----|------|---|
| 0.2 | 17.5 | There is a blacktopped road on the right. It leads to Pulwâmâ. A signboard here reads, 'Srinagar 16km./ Ânañtnâg 39km./ Pulwâmâ 14km.'  |
| 0.8 | 18.3 | The saffron fields of Pâmpore begin where the trees and bushes come to an end and the road dips somewhat. The fields are on both sides of the road.   |
| 2.6 | 20.9 | The road on the left goes, through saffron fields, to Tsandhâr (also spelt Chandahara, as at the bus shelter that has been built at this point). This is where the famous poetess Habba Khatoon was born and lived till she got married.  |
| 1.4 | 22.3 | Saffron fields come to an end shortly after the police station (on the right).  |
| 6.6 | 28.9 | The Avantisvara temple ruins are on the left. The name of the village is variously spelt Jawbara, Jawbera and Jawbehra. In academic texts it is referred to as Jawbrari.  |
| 0.6 | 29.5 | Syed Mantaqi Sâheb's ziyârat (shrine) is on the right.  |
| 0.8 | 30.3 | The Awantiporâ (Awantiswami) ruins are on the left.   |
| 2   | 32.3 | The road on the right leads to the Awantiporâ airport (not normally meant for civilian flights).<br>Between Kilometre stones 33 and 34, on the left there will be roadside stalls where they sell cricket bats and, in season, fruit. (The kilometre stones on the national highway differ from the distances given by us here by perhaps 2km. However, the kilometre stones between Khânabal and Pahalgâm coincide with our measurements.) |
| 7   | 39.3 | Ânañtnâg district begins. (Hereafter all distances have been rounded to the nearest kilometre.)   |
| 3   | 42   | Sather Sangam/ Chhechhkut village will be on both sides of the road. This is where cricket bats are manufactured. Most of the factories are on the left and quite close to the road.  |
| 1   | 43   | The Sangam bridge: this is roughly where rivers merge.  |
| 6   | 49   | Bijbehara.  |
| 6   | 55   | A tri-junction (Khânabal). The national highway (to Jammû, via Qazigund) continues on the right. The road on the left goes to Pahalgâm.   |



## From the Khânabal tri-junction to Pahalgâm

	55	Take the branch that goes left.
1	56	A major road on the right goes to Achâbal. (The road from Khânâbal to Pahalgâm is straight. However, after every few kilometres or so there will be side-roads. The ones that branch off to the right will lead to Achâbal or Mattan or both. For Achâbal, the road at this point is the best. The other good road to Achâbal is from the National Highway/ Vérinâg. However, if you are travelling from Srinagar, or even Pahalgâm, that road would be longer.)
1	57	Ânañtnâg town (Islâmad).
6	63	Mattan Chowk. The road on the right leads to Mattan, Mârtañd, Harut-Marut and Achâbal.
3	66	Bam Zoo. A road on the right leads to Mattan.
5	71	Seer. (The Seer Hamadân shrine is well inside the village, on the left.) There's a side-road on the right at the point where the village ends. This road, too, leads to Mattan.
6	76	Aish Muqâm. (The shrine is on top of a hillock on the right.)
14	90	Sarbal. On the left, across the river, is a small shrine. This is the <i>baithak</i> (seat) of Bâbâ Sakhi Zain ud Din Wali (of Aish Muqam). He performed a <i>chilla</i> here. (A <i>chillâ</i> is a 40-day solitary meditation with considerable hardship to the self. The goal is mystic communion.) A side-road on the right goes uphill from here. This is the 'Circuit Road' that leads to 'tourist huts.' Take this road only if you are certain about which 'hut' you are booked at.
6	96	Pahalgâm.

## ii) Towards Gulmarg-Bârâmulâ-Sopore-Wular

(This route gives broad directions for the 'Bârâmulâ' and 'Kupwârâ' districts. All distances given below, up to Parihâsporâ, are accurate to the nearest 500 metres.)

The road from Srinagar to Bârâmulâ (and then Urî) is absolutely direct. After you have been on this road for fourteen kilometres, you will come to a place called Nârbal (better known as the Nârbal crossing). If you turn left at this point, the wide side-road will take you to Tangmarg and Gulmarg.



However, to go to most places in B  r  mull   district (including Sopore, Pattan, B  r  mull   proper and Ur  ), or to Kupw  r   district, stay with the main road instead.

So, how does one get to this main road if one starts from S  rinagar City? The simplest is from the Hyderpora Chowk (a 'chowk' is a crossroad), which is on the road to S  rinagar airport. If you've reached this crossing, you have reached the road that will take you to Gulmarg or B  r  mull  . (If the airport is in front of you and S  rinagar City behind you, then the road to Gulmarg and B  r  mull   is the one on the right.)

But you are more likely to want to go to Gulmarg from one of the hotels or houseboats of S  rinagar. In that case let's go back to Jan Baker's. If it is directly behind you, then the wide road in front of you is the Maulana   z  d (or MA) Road. It begins at Jan Baker's and ends, four kilometres later, at the Batam  loo Bus Terminus, which is where you need to go first. This straight road runs somewhat thus:

***The Maulana   z  d (MA) Road***

0	0	Jan Baker's
0.2	0.2	On the right is the Kashmir Golf Club. The side-road on the left will take you to the Tourist Reception Centre, Radio Kashmir and then, past the bridge, to the SPS Museum, the L��l Ded Maternity Hospital and, ultimately, to the airport.
0.8	1	Hotel Broadway in on the right. The open ground on the left is the old polo ground.
0.1	1.1	The side road on the left is the upmarket Polo View/Link Road.
0.1	1.2	The Holy Family Catholic Church, right.
0.9	2	Maisuma Bazar, right.
0.4	2.4	The Budshah Bridge over River Jehlum. The Dogr�� Mah��r��j��s built the white Greco-Roman building across the river, on the right, in the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century. It now houses the state legislature. The Hi��nd�� temple on the left, also across the river, is dedicated to Han��m��n j��.
0.2	2.6	Jeh��ng��r Hotel is on the right. There is a crossroad. The road on the left is the Hari Singh (or HS) High Street. It leads to the Am��r�� Kadal. The one on the right will take you into the old town, including the offices of the Divisional and Deputy Commissioners.

Contd.



Contd.

0.1 2.7

Another crossroad. The road on the left goes directly to the airport and various places in Budgâm district, including Tsrâr-é-Sharief. (See Route iv below.) This road also goes directly to the aforementioned Hyderpora crossing, but now that you are in the city you might as well continue straight on the MA Road.

0.2 2.9

The High Court, right.

0.1 3.0

The five-storey (Civil) Secretariat, right.

0.5 3.5

There's a wide side road on the right. It leads to Karan Nagar and, ultimately, to Gulmarg and Bârânullâ. You should really be turning right at this point because the Batamâloo route is likely to be choked with vehicles. However, this route is too complicated for a newcomer. So, you might as well bear with the traffic jams of Batamâloo for the next kilometre or so.

0.4 3.9

The MA Road comes to an end here and the road that you have been on turns right. However, there is also a road that goes straight ahead, almost as if it is an extension of the MA Road. This road will take you to the highway that leads to Gulmarg/ Bârânullâ. Ignore it, for it goes through a residential area. Turn right instead.

0.1 4.0

The Batamâloo Bus Terminus, left.

0.4 4.4

A tri-junction. The road that we should have taken at '3.5' above joins us, from the right, here.

*Getting from the Batamâloo Bus Terminus to the road to Gulmarg/ Bârânullâ*

0 4.4

The tri-junction.

1 5.4

The Tatoo Ground crossing. The road straight ahead will take you to Gulmarg/ Bârânullâ all right, but through a very congested market. So, turn left.

2 7.4

The Bemina chowk. The road straight ahead will take you to a residential area. Turn right on the much wider road instead. Now, essentially, you are on the highway to Gulmarg/ Bârânullâ.

3 10.4

The Shâlteng crossing. (The road on the left leads to Shariefâbâd.)

Contd.



Contd.

- |   |      |   |
|---|------|---|
| 1 | 11.4 | The Pârimporâ crossing. Continue to go straight ahead. (The road on the right will look quite tempting on your return journey. It will join up with '5.4' above. So, ignore it for the same reason.) Now you are out of urban Srinagar and on the highway to Gulmarg/Bâramullâ. You just have to follow the highway to land up at Bâramullâ (and then Urî). |
|---|------|---|

***On the road to Gulmarg/ Bâramullâ: till the Nârbal crossing***

- |   |      |  |
|---|------|--|
|   | 11.4 | The Pârimporâ crossing.  |
| 7 | 18.4 | The shrine of Syed Ahmed Shâh Kîrmânî, right.  |
| 1 | 19.4 | The Nârbal crossing. Go straight for Bâramullâ, Sopore, the Wular, Urî, and all places in Kupwârâ district. Turn left for Tangmarg, <b>Gulmarg</b> and Bâbâ Réshî. |

***Nârbal to Bâramullâ***

- |     |      |   |
|-----|------|---|
| 0   | 19.4 | The Nârbal crossing. It is a pretty road for several kilometres.  |
| 2.2 | 21.6 | Mîrgund: the Government Silk Farm is on the right.  |
| 1.7 | 23.3 | The Devar/ Parihâsporâ crossing. ( <i>See the detour below.</i> )   |
| 8   | 31.3 | Pattan temple 1   |
| 1   | 32.3 | Pattan temple 2   |
| 17  | 49.3 | Saṅgrâmâ crossing: the side-road on the right leads to Sopore and then to Kupwârâ district.   |
| 3   | 52.3 | Singhporâ crossing: Singhporâ is up the slope on the left. Apparently, the ancient Chinese scholar Hiuen T'sang visited this village. |
| 7   | 59.3 | Bâramullâ   |

**ii-a) If you take the side-road on the left to Gulmarg (at '19.4' above), you will pass Tangmarg en route.**

The road between Tangmarg and Gulmarg is wooded and pretty. You will soon come to a point where a side-road will branch off to the right, to the famous Bâbâ Réshî shrine. By taking a very small detour at this point you can go to Bâbâ Réshî. You won't have to return from Bâbâ Réshî to this point. The same road (it's a loop, actually) will take you to Gulmarg.



ii-b) *Detour: The Devar/ Parihâsporâ crossing to the main Parihâsporâ ruins.*

- |     |      |  |
|-----|------|--|
| 0   | 23.3 | The Devar/ Parihâsporâ crossing. Take the side-road on the right. It is a wobbly road that must once have been good.   |
| 1   | 24.3 | A faded sign points uphill towards archaeological ruins. Turn right here. (Distances given for this detour, hereafter, are accurate to the nearest 100 metres.)                                  |
| 0.1 | 24.4 | Crossroads. The road on the left, steep uphill, leads to the minor ruins.<br>For the main ruins, proceed right, on the milder uphill slope. You will pass SSM Polytechnic, which is on the left. |
| 1.9 | 26.3 | The main Parihâsporâ ruins are on the right.   |

*From the faded sign to the minor Parihâsporâ ruins*

- |     |      |  |
|-----|------|--|
| 0   | 24.3 | A faded sign points uphill towards archaeological ruins. If in a vehicle, turn right. (If you are travelling on foot you can climb up the brief, approximately 10 metre, slope here.)  |
| 0.1 | 24.4 | (Assuming that you had turned right at '24.3.')  |
|     |      | Crossroads. Take the road on the left, which goes steep uphill.  |
| 0.2 | 24.6 | There will be a grassy path, uphill, on the left. Because it is grassy you might even miss it. It runs along a barbed wire. Turn left here. You can travel another 200m. or so in a vehicle.   |
| 0.2 | 24.8 | You can drive on a country road, past an iron gate, till you come to a sign that says 'Devar Yakhmanpora Ground Water Bank.' Leave your vehicle here. Ignore the short path on the right, which leads to the offices of the 'bank.' Instead go straight, on a path that is slightly to the left. You will have to go through (or jump over) two more iron gates. |
| 0.2 | 25.0 | The minor ruins.   |



## ii-c) Bâramullâ-Uri

(Distances for this section were measured with a speedometer accurate only to the nearest kilometer.)

- 0 Bâramullâ/ Highway: On the right is a major side road that leads to Sopore and Kupwârâ. We go straight.
- 1 Bâramullâ: The shrine of Syed Janbaz Wali is on the right.
- 18 A ziyârat, right, is below the road level.
- 20 Boniyar. Brig. Rajinder Singh (*see 'History'*) was martyred here, right, at the spot marked with a plaque.
- 20.5 Boniyar: Ancient temple, left.
- 21 Boniyar: On the right is a 'viewpoint' from which the reservoir of the Uri Hydel project can be seen.
- 22.5 Boniyar: Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah was detained here in 1953, immediately after he was removed from power and placed under arrest.
- 23 Boniyar: The storage tank of the dam is on the right. Gulmarg, left, is a four-hour trek from Boniyar.
- 23.5 There is a wooden aqueduct/ canal below the surface of the road, right. The Mohura-Boniyar canal is made entirely of wooden 'sleepers' and was constructed by the Dogrâ Mahârâjâs in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It will stay with us for the next 6.5 km. A walk along the picturesque aqueduct is a non-strenuous activity that young as well as middle-aged adventure-lovers indulge in.
- 24.5 Rampur: The aqueduct is now on the left (and will mostly remain on our left). It enters a tunnel here. The river at Rampur is famous for its mahaseer fish. The Dogrâ Mahârâjâs had constructed an anglers' lodge here (right). It is next to the road and is now with the Army.
- 25 Rampur: the aqueduct/canal is close to the road. It now begins to steer away from the road, and will remain away.
- 29 Part of the aqueduct/ canal crosses the road from left to right, so that excess waters spill into the river (Jehlum) on the right.

Contd.



Contd.

- 31 The aqueduct is well above the road level now. It goes through little tunnels at places. Here, POK is on the right as well as left.
- 33 Two wide, rust-coloured pipes bring water down from the canal on the left to the Mohura power plant (right).
- 34 The Haji Pir pass (POK) is on the left. Pākistān annexed it illegally in 1947-49. India recaptured it in 1965. It was later returned to Pākistān in exchange for territory elsewhere. Bagh, a tehsil now in POK, is also on the left.
- 35 Dâtâ temple, left. Late 20<sup>th</sup> century benefactors have added a red gate. This ancient temple is stylistically similar to the Shârdâ temple of Muzaffarâbâd (POK). The latter is said to be the only Shârdâ/ Saraswati temple in all of undivided Kashmîr.
- 36 Urî hydel project, right. (It has 14 km. of tunnels in all. Offices of the project are about 1.5 km. from this point. 0.6 km. of this distance is through a splendid tunnel.)
- Bagh tehsil is behind the mountain here.
- 41 Lagâmâ: On the left, up a flight of steps, is an old government rest house. The milestone reads, 'Bandy 0km.' Actually we left it behind us a kilometre or so ago. A few metres ahead, on the same road to Urî, is a side-road on the right, which slopes downwards. A sign here says, 'Ziyârat Panj Peer + Gurûdwara Chhatti Padshahi: 3.5 km.' If you choose to walk down to the Gurûdwara, it is just 0.5 km. from here, taking the steep short cut.
- This is the third most important Gurûdwara in all Kashmîr. On Baisakhi day (generally 13 April) Sikhs from all over the Valley come here in around two thousand vehicles, after having paid homage at the similarly named Gurûdwaras of Srinagar and Bâramullâ.

47

Urî.



### iii) In the direction of Sonamarg (and Bâltal and Ladâkh)

Let's go back to the same Jan Baker's. Turn around. Now Jan Bakers is on your right. Go straight. Less than five hundred metres later you will come to a tri-junction. On the right will be the Boulevard. In front, slightly to the left, will be a little bridge. Cross it. Go straight. After a kilometre or so (at Kohna Khân) there will be a major road on the left (and a temple made of stone slabs next to the road). Ignore the road on the left. Follow the main road for another kilometre or so till you reach a major fork. The road on the left leads to Dastgîr Sâheb and 'downtown Srinagar'. Take the one on the right and follow it as it turns and twists. After another kilometre or so the road will swing to the left. (A smaller side-road on the right will branch off towards Rainâwari.) After that the road will take you straight to Hazratbal, the Naseem Bâgh University Campus and, ultimately, to Sonamarg and Leh.

(If you want to avoid the crowds of downtown Srinagar, turn right at the above-mentioned tri-junction. Travel on the Boulevard for a few kilometres till you reach the Nishat Gardens. The Dal Lake comes to an end at this point and turns left. The Northern Foreshore Road (NFR) branches off from the Boulevard at the same point and also goes left. To wit, it takes over from the Boulevard and runs along the lake. Follow the NFR and you will reach the Naseem Bâgh University Campus.)

### iv) Tsrar-e-Sharief-Yusmarg

Travel on the MA Road (see details above) till you reach the '2.7km.' point, just ahead of the Jehangir Hotel. Turn left here.

The road on the left will go, past Iqbal Park and the Bakshi Stadium (both left), the Shergarhi Police Station (right) and the Silk Factory (distant right), over a longer (Ram Munshi) bridge (across a mostly dry riverbed). Now you will reach another road junction. The first road on the left leads to the Zam Zam hotel (right) and the SIDCO office (left). Ignore this road. Instead, take the second road on the left (the central road). It goes past a Sikh Gurûdwara (right), through Barzula Baghât, to Tsrar-e-Sharief and Yusmarg.

### Best time to visit/ The tourist seasons

Kashmîr is an all-weather destination. When you visit it depends on what you are looking for: and your convenience. The majority of tourists are governed by vacations in their part of the world.

The 'year' begins in April-May with tourists from Gujarât and Mahârâshtra. Delhi and Central India follow in June and the first half of July. Then comes a lull because there are no vacations in any part of India from the 15<sup>th</sup> July to roughly the fortnight before Durgâ Puja. Tourists from Western Europe,



as well as domestic tourists not accompanied by children, fill this gap. From mid-September to early-November it is the turn of Bengali tourists.

Then again there is a lull till the Christmas vacations. As soon as snow in Gulmarg is fit for skiing, upper income tourists start coming in: from the West as well as from the rest of India. This spell lasts from mid-January to the end of March. This is also when East Asian tourists visit Kashmîr.

April is late-spring and almond blossoms would still be in place. May and June are good for getting away from the heat of the plains. By mid-July Srinagar City gets fairly warm. Day temperatures sometimes touch 37°C. Temperatures start falling after the 15<sup>th</sup> August. My family, like the Bengalis, prefers autumn because of the profusion of fruit. (The fruit season begins in late May.)

Saffron flowers bloom for about three weeks from mid-October to the first days of November. To see them during the day is nice. But seeing (and smelling) them on a moonlight October night is an experience even emperors—notably Jehangir, the Mughal—would crave for.

The leaves of trees other than evergreens start turning yellow or brown by late-September or early-October. Before filmmaker Yash Chopra became an honorary citizen of Switzerland he would always try to capture Kashmîri autumns in his films.

The prettiest sight of them all is Chinâr groves 'aflame'. (*Chee*= what; *nâr*= flame.) The leaves of this majestic tree turn reddish-brown and stay that way between mid-October and mid-November. 'What flame is that?' (*Chee nâr ast?*) a Mughal is said to have asked in Persian, on seeing groves so red that they seemed to be on fire. Thereby giving the tree a new, Persian name. (The older, Kashmîrî name is *bonî*.)

### ***The weather***

Mean maximum and minimum temperatures, in degrees celsius (°C), are given below. They are based on data collected in the 1960s, '70s and '80s. The low-rainfall years between 1998 and 2002 were somewhat different from the general trend. April 1999, for instance, was incredibly pleasant. During the day one did not need woollens at all. On the other hand it rained through much of April and May 2003, making them colder than in the previous years. Therefore, because of global climate change, the chart below (and suggestions for clothing) is only indicative. It would help to check the weather from the newspapers or television before deciding on the type of clothes to take along.



*Srinagar weather*

(Pahalgâm is slightly colder. Gulmarg and Sonamarg are infinitely more so.)

Month	Maximum	Minimum	Recommended clothing
January	4.4	-2.3	Very cold. Heavy woollens, gloves, cap, thermal underwear, warm socks
February	7.9	-0.8	Very cold. Heavy woollens, gloves, cap, thermal underwear, warm socks
March	13.4	3.5	Cold, like Delhi in January. Woollens needed..
April	19.3	7.4	Cold. Woollens needed. Can be slushy.
May	24.6	11.2	Bring some woollens along. Can be slushy if the snow is still melting uphill. It gets quite cold whenever it rains.
June	29.0	14.4	Tropical clothes. T-shirts weather.
July	30.8	18.4	Warmest month of the year. Srinagar clocks 38°C for one or two days almost every year.
August	29.9	17.9	Starts getting cool after the 15 <sup>th</sup> . Some people need a light sweater then.
September	28.3	12.7	Light woollens in the evenings. T-shirts during the day.
October	22.6	5.7	Light woollens mostly, but some Octobers are quite cold after the 10 <sup>th</sup> .
November	15.5	-0.1	Nights are quite cold. Coats are needed even during the day.
December	8.8	-1.0	Very cold. Heavy woollens, gloves, cap, thermal underwear, warm socks

**Conventions and seminars**

Srinagar has been a venue for conventions since at least the 1960s. Organisers would use the banquet and other halls of the better local hotels. In the late 1980s the state government, in collaboration with a subsidiary of Air India, set up the world-class Sher-e-Kashmîr International Convention Centre (SKICC) on the Boulevard, overlooking the Dal Lake. It is attached to what then was the only five-star hotel in town, the Centaur. The SKICC has half a dozen meeting halls, a 600-seat auditorium, a large banquet hall (the size of which can be varied) which can be converted into a meeting hall, catering facilities and a lounge which doubles as an additional banquet hall. The technical wherewithal exists for simultaneous translation.



# *Kashmîr: The main resorts: Hotels, transport, hospitals and shopping, etc.*

Fact file

Place	Area (Sq.km.)	Popn.	Best Time	Temp Max Celsius	Temp Min Celsius	Rainfall in mm
Gulmârg	11 km (circum- ference)	0 (neighb- ouring villages: 750 est.)	April- June, Sept- Nov.; Jan-Mar.	28.4 Nights are cold even in summer. So afternoons if it rains.	Minus 19.8 Consider- ably colder than Srinagar, with much heavier snowfall.	Between 882 (in 1993) and 1874 (in 1994)
Pāhālgām	10 sq km (approx)	4000 (est)	April- June, Sept- Nov.	32.2 Cooler than Srinagar at any given time of the day.	Minus 18.5 More snowfall than in Srinagar.	Between 981 (in 1992) and 1636 (in 1996)
Srinagar	416 (city) 2,228 (district)	12 lakh (estima- ted)	April- June, Sept- Nov.	36.6 11.8	Minus 11.8	Between 440 (in 1991) and 961 (in 1992)

**Notes: Temperatures:** All temperatures are in degrees Celsius.

January is the coldest month and July the warmest.

**Rain and snow:** Kashmîr does not quite have monsoons like the rest of the sub-continent does. Gulmarg has rain almost throughout the year, summer, spring and autumn, normally in the afternoons. September is the month when Kashmîr receives its heaviest rains. March is the month of the heaviest snowfall. However, there are exceptions. Sometimes the heaviest snowfall is in February, especially in Gulmarg.

All figures are for average annual rainfall and are in mm.

**Area and population:** Gulmarg has no resident population. Pāhālgām on the other hand has a small village within, with a population of around 2,000.



### The Sri Amarnâthji Yâtrâ

Around a month before the Yâtrâ, J&K Tourism places huge advertisements in the major newspapers of India. These ads give details of how prospective pilgrims (yâtris) can 'register' themselves for the Yâtrâ (pilgrimage) at the nearest branch of the designated bank (which in 2002 and 2003 was the Jammû and Kashmir Bank Limited).

**Medical facilities:** Special dispensaries are set up at the two roadheads, Pahalgâm and Bâltal. Considering the circumstances, the facilities are quite good and include X-ray machines. There are doctors at the major halts, Shesh Nâg, Panjtarni and Chafîdanwâri. They are mostly there for (free) consultation and advice. They have some (free) medicines: naturally never enough considering that more than 1,00,000 of the pilgrims actually consult at least one of these doctors.

### Srînagar: where to stay and other essential information

**Population:** The main city had a population of 8.94 lakh (0.89 million) in 2001. Including the suburbs it would be around 12 lakh (1.2 million), spread over two districts, Srînagar and Badgam.

**Languages spoken:** Kashmiri, Urdu, English

**Telephone (STD) code:** 0194

**Religions:** More than 90% of the population is Muslim. There has traditionally been a substantial Hindu and Sikh presence in the city, with a very large number of temples and some major Gurûdwaras. The town also has a small Christian community and two fine churches.

**Location:** The Valley of Kashmîr is immediately north of Jammû and south-west of Kargil (Ladâkh). Within the Valley, Srînagar is almost in the centre. It is 52 km. from Gulmarg and 96 km. from Pahalgâm.

Srînagar is 293 km. from Jammû, 204 km. from Kargil, 434 km. from Leh, 630 km. from Chandigarh, and 876 km. from Delhi.

### Where to stay:

The choice is firstly between houseboats and hotels. The difference between the two is of atmosphere and experience, not price. Both come in upmarket, deluxe versions as well as their very inexpensive cousins. If it is to be a houseboat, then the normal choice is between the popular Dal Lake and the quiet Nageen Lake. There are also mid—and down—market houseboats on the Jehlum, near the Bund; in the Tsont-e-Kul, near the Dal Lake; and in sundry channels, e.g. the one near Radio Kashmîr, behind the TRC.

If you decide on staying in a hotel, you'll have a fairly wide choice.

There has traditionally been only one officially certified 5-star hotel in Srînagar: the public sector Centaur on the Boulevard on the Dal Lake. Each



room has a view of the lake. The lawns are great. However, government servants have taken most of its rooms on a long-term basis. Broadway and the Grand Palace, thus, are the two luxury hotels in town that are open to the public.

*Self-catering holiday cottages:* There are public-sector, self-catering 'huts' in Cheshma Shahi and its neighbouring Pari Mahal. These are excellent value for money and come in 1, 2 and 3 bedrooms. All of them have a living-cum-dining room, a kitchen and one or two bathrooms. The rent covers linen, crockery, cutlery, adequate kitchen utensils and a gas stove. You have to pay extra for the gas, though. There's a 33% concession in July and August, and a 50% concession from November to March.

*Guest Houses:* You will find them in the following areas: a) the Raj Bâgh area, Lâl Mandi, Wazir Bâgh-Iqbal Park, Gogji Bâgh, Zero Bridge; b) Old Gagribal road, Dal Gate, Khayyam Chowk, Khayyam Road, Kohna Khân (Dal Gate); c) the Amira Kadal area (including the Court Road), Magarmal Bâgh, Budshah Chowk, Maisuma Bazar and Lâl Chowk.

You will also find guest houses in Brain (Nishat), Nagin, Naqashpura (Sathu), Shivporâ, Sonawar, Aab-e-Guzar, Aluchi Bâgh, Ram Bâgh, Pandrethan, Bagwanporâ and Rawalporâ.

During much of the 1990s, all but three or four hotels in Kashmîr had to be mothballed because there was no custom. Most of them reopened in 1999. As a result, some facilities might not be up to scratch. But then tariffs are among the lowest in India. Except for the luxury hotels, as of today there is little to choose between two hotels or houseboats in the same price range. The names of the better-known hotels are as follows.

After the name of each hotel we have mentioned its categorisation (done by the government), then, in brackets, the phone number (where available), followed by the tariff for single-and double-bedrooms, in that order. Hotels that have been able to work out their tariff for the season are obviously better prepared to receive tourists than those that have not.

### **Luxury hotels:**

*Centaur Lake View* (2452341-4; 2475731-33; fax 2471877): On the Boulevard. Non-English speaking people call it the 'Santoor hotel'. It was a five-star hotel before 1989. Has deteriorated considerably since, though the rating remains. Bad food. Rs.1800 for a standard room. Rooms are unlikely to be available as long as it has bulk bookings from the government.

*Broadway* (2459001-3): Centrally located (on Maulana Âzâd Road, next to the golf course). Four-star before 1989. Has been renovated and refurbished since. Rs.2000 for a standard room.



*The Grand Palace* (2470101, 2456701, 2456701; fax: 2453794): Near the Raj Bhawan. Three-star before 1989, when it was the Oberoi Palace. And yet in most ways more upmarket (and expensive) than the Centaur or Broadway. Its recent renovations have made it look like a business, rather than resort, hotel. Indifferent food. USP: the mountain range behind, the best lawns in town and a stunning view of the lake. Rs.5000 for a standard room.

## The other hotels

### Central S  rinagar

Convenient location; low rates-except at Ahdoo's; little scenery; crowded during the day.

Location Name of hotel	Cate-Telephone gory	Tariff (in Indian rupees)	Cuisine/Remarks
<b>Residency (Sherwani) Road</b>			
Ahdoo's	B 2471984,2472593	1000 (double bed)	Kashmiri, continental.
Grand	B 2476583	700-1000 DR	Kashmiri, continental.
Odeon	C 473435, 473536	200-300 DR	North Indian.
<b>Lambert Lane</b>			
Ruby	A 2474724	750 DR	Kashmiri, continental.
Shiraz	A 2471835	300-400 DR	Partly open, no catering.
<b>L��l Chowk</b>			
Bharat Hindu	B 2473598	150-250 DR	Vegetarian.
Bombay Gujarat	E 2477807	250 DR	North Indian.
Crown	C		Not open in 2004.
Juniper	C 2471031		Restaurant open.
Kashmir International	B 2475975	350-500 DR	Kashmiri.
Kashmir Khalsa (Amira Kadal)	C 2477029	150-200 DR	North Indian.
Kashmir Valley	C 2479092	200-300 DR	North Indian.
Naya Kashmir	E -	200-300 DR	No catering.
New City Centre	B 2455566	100-200 DR	North Indian.
New Orion	E 2474221	250 DR	North Indian.
New Standard	C -	250-300	North Indian.
New York	E 2473580	200-280 DR	Kashmiri.
Orion	C 2472431	450 DR	Please check availability.

Contd.



Contd.

Peak View  
(Neelam)

C 2475929, 2472412 250-300 DR

Kashmiri.

Punjab

E 2474163 250-300 DR

North Indian.

Standard

C 2473065 250-400 DR

Authentic, middle-budget  
Kashmiri food. Please  
check availability of  
rooms.

Taj

B 2479556 450 DR

North Indian.

**The Bund (Ab-e-Guzar)**

Heera Mahal

E - 200-300 DR

North Indian.

Moti Mahal

E 2478699 200-300 DR

North Indian.

Rizwan

D 2474446 150,200

North Indian.

**Jehangir Chowk to Neelam Chowk**

Akbar

E 2470791 150, 200

North Indian.

Broadview

E 247446, 2478066 150, 200

North Indian.

Fayaz

E 2474453 200 DR

North Indian.

Jehangir

A 2471830, 2471831 450,700

Kashmiri, Continental.

Naaz

E 2475223 150, 200

North Indian.

**MA Maulana Âzâd Road**

Bi Zone

E 2473428 200 DR

North Indian.

**Sarai Payeen**Ellora, Wazir  
Bagh

B 2430528 350-400

Vegetarian.

Iqbal View

E 2477251, 2474485 150,200

North Indian.

Kapoor Hotel  
Goni Khân

E 300-400

Vegetarian.

New River View  
Near Lâl Ded  
Hospital

B 300-400

North Indian.

**South Srînagar****Zero bridge** (Open spaces, a view of the river, good location, but still not  
noisy)

Remano

B 2476770 250-300

North Indian.

Sahil

E 2476363 150-200

North Indian.

Zero Inn

B 2477904 250-300

North Indian.



## Near the Dal Lake

*On the Boulevard* (The area most favoured by tourists; as a result rates are higher.)

Basera	A	2473990	500; 700 DR	Kashmiri, Continental.
Heemal	A	2456670	Most rooms are with long-term guests.	North Indian. Public sector.
Imperial Lake View	A	2472805	900, 1200	Kashmiri, Continental.
Madhuban	A	2453860, fax 2453677	1100, 1500	Kashmiri, Continental.
Paradise	B	2478667	500, 700	North Indian.
Pari Mahal	A	2471613, 2478885	1250, 1600	Most rooms are with long-term guests.
Pine Grove	B	2472405	550, 700	Most rooms are with long-term guests.
Shāh Abbas	A	2479334, 2479861 fax 2476553	900-1000 SR 1400 DR	Kashmiri, Continental.
Welcome Hotel	A	2479553, 479704; fax 479667	1850 EP; 3000 AP.	Kashmiri, Continental.
Zabarvan	A	2471441, 2471442; fax: 2473387, 2427336	2740 DR AP; 1450 EP	Continental, Kashmiri.
Zamrud	A	2473123, 2473124	EP 1200; AP 2100	Continental, Kashmiri.

*On islands inside the Dal Lake*

Chachoo Palace	D	-	100 DR	No catering.
Green View	D	2453859	100-200	North Indian.
Heaven Canal	D	2473943	200, 250	North Indian.
Island	D	2478641	150, 300	North Indian.
Lake Side	D	2430235	200-300	North Indian.
Mir Palace	D	-	150, 200	North Indian.
New Green View	D	2457117	150, 200	North Indian.
New Shalimar	D	2473339	200, 300	North Indian.
Savoy	D	-	100	North Indian.
Sea Face	D	-	100	North Indian.
Sony	D	-	100	North Indian.
Sundowns	D	-	100	North Indian.



**Kohna Khân** (Close to the lake, just north of the Dal Gate. Not as pricey as hotels on the less congested Boulevard)

Akbar	B	2474547, 2452916	360,660	North Indian.
Cathay	B	2474014/ 2470114	300, 400	North Indian.
Crescent	C	2478491	150-200	North Indian.
Dal Rim	C	2475541	200-250	North Indian.
Chil Rose, Khayam Road	C	2471121	150-200	North Indian.
New Metro	B	2471199	400-600 DR	North Indian.
New National	C	-	200-300	North Indian.
Pacific			Check if open.	Not open in 2004.
Rooma	E		150-200	North Indian.
Royal	E		150-200	North Indian.
Sahara	C	-	200-300	North Indian.
Shabnam		2451813	Check if open.	Not open in 2003.

### **The Nageen Lake area**

Lake Isle Resort	A	2426987	850,1500	North Indian.
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### **Guest Houses**

Gani, Shivpora		2476594, 2475644	200,300	Check availability of rooms./Close to the army area.
Green Mountain, Sonawar	C	2476173	250 DR	North Indian. Near the national highway; close to the army area.
Green Acre, Raj Bdgh	C	2475103	300,550	Vegetarian /A good residential neighbour-hood.

### **The Dal Lake area**

Jedha, Kohna Khân				Not open in 2004.
Rubeena, Buchwara, Dal Gate	E	-	150-200	
Star Queen, Abi, Dal Gate	E			

### **Central Srinagar**

Ajanta Lodge, Regal Chowk				Not open in 2004.
Blue Star, Court Road, Lal Chowk	E	2474328, 2472761	200 DR	North Indian.



### The state public sector

The J&K TDC gives the best value for money in town. It has three well-located, inexpensive, reasonably well-furnished properties. *The Tourist Reception Centre*, between Radio Kashmir and the Srinagar Golf Club, is a landmark in its own right. (2474060, 2475915, 2472644; fax 2476107.) Its rooms are slightly better and marginally more expensive than at the TDC's *Heemal* on the Boulevard. The TDC has a number of self-catering 'huts' in the exclusive *Cheshma Shahi* area. These huts have 1, 2 or 3 bedrooms, with a drawing-dining room, kitchen and utensils. The TDC runs a restaurant at the centre of this sprawling complex. Don't expect room service, though. These huts are the most economical, yet upmarket, option in town for families that like to cook their own food. However, it is unlikely that any of the huts in this complex would be vacant between May and October 2003. Or in the foreseeable future.

### Restaurants

The Kashmiris love eating. Downmarket restaurants and inexpensive bakeries for local people will be found even in the smallest of small towns, and in major villages. And yet, no Kashmiri will ever go to a restaurant to eat a w  zw  n. Restaurants serve items from the w  zw  n feast mainly for tourists. The following will help you locate the restaurants that tourists frequent.

In Srinagar, midmarket restaurants are clustered around i) the fashionable Residency (Sherwani) Road-Polo View junction. Polo View is more upscale than even Residency Road; ii) the entire Residency Road. The character of this 2.5km-road changes as one travels from one end to the other. The Emporium-end of Residency Road is more Westernised and upmarket. L  l Chowk is at the other end of the road. It is more Punj  bi-Kashmiri; and cheaper. (Its flavours are also more authentic.); iii) Lambert Lane is a side-lane that branches off from the Residency Road near Regal Cinema. Deep inside you could once find inexpensive South Indian/ Gujar  ti food. Once there are enough tourists, hotels like Shri S  rat   might revive; iv) across the Amira Kadal bridge there are inexpensive Hindu (Punj  bi) restaurants; v) Maulana Azad Road runs parallel to Residency (Sherwani) Road. At the Golf Course end there are two hotels, both expensive. One of them, Nedous', has been unavailable to tourists since the 1990s. Like the Residency Road, the MA Road gradually goes downmarket as we travel west. The Budshah Chowk is near the other end. In this area there are fewer restaurants, and those are mainly frequented by local people; vi) the New Secretariat area has a clutch of midmarket restaurants; vii) the Boulevard has several neat restaurants. So do some of the side-lanes that branch off from the Boulevard; viii) the Dal Gate to Kohna Kh  n to Dastg  r Chowk road: Here you will find several low-priced hotels, often designed for Gujar  ti tourists. They have mid-range dining rooms attached.



**Srinagar: Hospitals and doctors**

**Medical facilities:** All over India bright young people aspire to be doctors. The people of Kashmir have greater faith in allopathic medicine than people do in any other part of South Asia. As a result the youth of Kashmir are obsessed with wanting to become doctors: the fancier the medical degree after their name the better. Therefore there are first rate doctors and clinics in every neighbourhood. As elsewhere in India, there are chemists in every market. However, you are likely to find more doctors' private clinics per square kilometre than elsewhere.

All district headquarters have a 'district hospital.' Pahalgâm has a fairly good hospital, too. Gulmarg has some medical facilities.

The Sher-e-Kashmîr Institute of Medical Science, Soura, is the best in the state and one of the best in North India. The next in order of importance in all Kashmir is the SMHS Hospital.

Name	Address	Phone
<b>Government hospitals</b>		
Bone and Joint	Barzulla	2430149 2430155
Bone and Joint (Emergency Ward)	Barzulla	2430612
CD (Chest Diseases)	Drugjan	2477147
Casualty		2451264
Childrens' Hospital	Wazir Bâgh	2452021
Emergency		2451317
Chittaranjan	Karan Nagar	2452434
	Hazratbal	2420233
G.B. Pant	Sonwar, Badami Bâgh	2452531
Emergency	Cannt.	2456668
JLNM (Jawahar Lâl Nehru)	Rainâwari	2452025 2477332 2476542
PCO		
Lâl Ded (casualty)	Hazuri Bâgh	2451316
Lâl Ded (for women)	Hazuri Bâgh	2452017 2452018 2477527 2452518 2426256
Psychiatric Diseases	Kathi Darwaza, Rainâwari	
Sher-e-Kashmîr Institute of Medical Science (SKIMS)	Soura	2420682 2420683

Contd.



Contd.

		2421348
		2421351
		2421353
		2421354
		2422261
		2422520
		2422582
		2422583
		2422592
		2422593
		2422971
		2425618
		2427064
		2427242
SKIMS Emergency Ward	Soura	2423508
SMHS (Sri Maharaj Hari Singh)	Karan Nagar	2452013
		2452291
		2452297
		2458853
		2477378
		2477379
SMHS Casualty	Karan Nagar	2451312
		2479063
<b>Private:</b>		
Kashmîr Nursing Home	Gupkar Road	2477546
Khanam's Hosp. and Nrsg Hme	Iqbal Park, Magarmal	2452552
	Bâgh	2477354
Lord's Favour Nrsg Home	Raj Bâgh	2478907
		2477510
Medicare	Buchwara, Dal Gate	2472128
		2435070
Ramzan	8, Gogji Bâgh, opp.	2434045
	Amar Singh College	



## Shopping

There are two kinds of things visitors to Kashmir like to take back with them: fruit and handicrafts. Kashmir has plenty of both.

There are no designated markets for particular handicrafts. However, in the chapter on 'Handicrafts' we have tried to indicate where to get which handicraft. For instance, the Khânqâh-e-Mu'alla area (Gârhkoch street) is famous for 'tilla' work embroidery, normally around the neckline of women's shirts (qameezes). The area is also good for pherans (cloaks).

The Nowhatta area around the Jâmâ Masjid and the Naid Kadal-Bohri Kadal-Zaina Kadal area, too, are good places to obtain tilla work, pherans and *kundan* jewellery, as well as to get pashmina shâwls embroidered.

The handicrafts that Kashmir is famous for are Basket-work, Carpets, Chain-stitching, Copperware, Crewel-work, Embroidery, Fur, Gabbas, Jewellery, Kângris, Leather goods, Namdas, Paper, *Papiér Mâchè*, Perfumes, Pherans, Shâwls, Silk, Walnut furniture and Wicker-work.

Officially, shops are supposed to open between 9 am and 8 pm in the summers (1 Apr-31 Oct) and 10 am and 8 pm in winter (1 Nov-31 Mar). Most shops are closed on Sundays. In winter many close as soon as it gets dark and cold.

The major shopping areas are: the Bund (once the promenade of the elite, now in some disrepair; the furriers and some top notch carpet and shawl shops are still there); Residency Road (all items: for local people as well as tourists); the Boulevard and shops inside the Dal lake (for handicrafts only; they cater only to tourists); Hari Singh High Street (for jewellery; mainly for local people); the so-called 'Government' Central Market near the New Secretariat (for handicrafts etc.; mainly for tourists).

Local perfumes are a dying art. Habib-ur-Rehman, in an inside lane opposite the Lâl Chowk clock tower, is one of the few who sell them.

Residency (Sherwani) Road is fairly long. It begins with the Government Arts Emporium, housed in what used to be the British resident's house. The original house was destroyed in a fire in the 1990s. It is being rebuilt. The Emporium used to be the city's finest treasure house of Kashmiri handicrafts. It still is fairly good. Sometimes you can bargain prices down by upto 7%.

Next comes the Polo View segment, which is the most upmarket. Lambert Lane can be expensive but has always had a reputation for quality. Affluent local people shop there. The closer you get to Lâl Chowk the more downmarket the shops get. There are inexpensive furriers near and behind Neelam Hotel at Lâl Chowk.



## Tours and Transport

As of today there are no organised day-tours. Most tourists (86%) arrive by road from Jammu or Katra. Their taxi drivers include in the fare visits to the principal sights of Kashmir. Luxury hotels and houseboats of the upper end have their own arrangements to show you the sights, for a fee.

The public-sector J&K Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC) arranges guided day-tours for *groups*.

Both the JKTDC and private tour operators (esp. Raja-Rani Travels of Mumbai) offer packages that include accommodation, meals and airport transfers. The JKTDC wants bookings to be confirmed at least 20 days in advance.

**Local buses** start from the Main Bus Stand near Lal Chowk. The city also has a fairly efficient network of mini-buses.

The terminal for inter-city buses is at Batmaloo, beyond the New Secretariat and High Court. That's where, in the summers, you'll get buses bound for Gulmarg, Pahalg  m and Sonamarg as well.

**Taxis:** Insist on paying according to the rates fixed by the taxi union (or, better still, the government). The June 2003 rates per taxi are given below.

An Ambassador taxi for the full day (9 hours), including fuel charges for the first 100km., comes for Rs.465. One union quoted Rs.1,050 per day. For Sumos the rate for a full-day hire is Rs.787. (There are extra charges after 100km.: some unions charge extra after 110km.) After that it is Rs.7.91 per kilometre for Sumos and Rs.10.20 for Ambassadors. Drivers charge Rs.25 for every hour that they have to wait.

The fares given below were approved in August 2002. This is the fare-schedule that the 'Drivers' Union' gave me in June 2003. There was no new 'rate-list' between then and June 2003. Therefore, all these rates, especially those for Sumos, are only indicative. The rates mentioned for 'Amb[assador]/ Van' are more or less accurate even for June 2003. The fares are in Indian rupees. In some cases rival taxi unions have cited different rates. This has been indicated in brackets.

From the TRC to	Sumo	Amb/Van
Airport (one way)	350	300
Airport (return/ pick up)	550	550
��na��tn��g one way		400
��na��tn��g return		600
Around S��rinagar (Jama Masjid, Hari Parbat, Hazratbal, Sh��h-e-Hamadan)	400	400

Contd.



Contd.

Bāltal (one way)	2000	1800 (or 1500)
Bāltal (return, with night halt)	3200	3500
Bārāmullā one way		500
Bārāmullā return		700
Daksum	1600	1450
Daksum, Achabal, Kokernāg (return)		1550
Delhi (one way)		10,000
Dharmshālā (one way)		6,500
Mughal Gardens, city, S'charya temple	800	770
Gulmarg (return)	1050	1080 (or 1045)
Gulmarg (one way)		950
Jammu (full taxi)	2310*	3025 (Amb, petrol) 2475 (Amb, diesel) 2250 (van)
Jammu (per seat)	330	605 (Amb petrol) 495 (Amb, diesel)450
Kargil (one way, full taxi)	3000	3000
Kargil (one way, per seat)	440	600
Kargil (return 3 days later, full taxi)	5600	6000^
Leh (one way)	8000	8700 (or 7500)
Leh (return 7 days later)	11000	13,000
Mānasbal, Kheer Bhawānī (return)	800	900 (or 750)
Mānasbal, Kheer Bhawānī, Wular Lake (return)		1550
Mughal Gardens	400	400
Pahalgām (one way)		1150
Pahalgām (return)	1550	1550**
Pahalgām (sightseeing with Achabal, Kokernag)		2150
Shankarāchārya temple	300	250
Sonamarg (return)	1500	1550

Contd.



Contd.

Sonamarg (one way)		1250
Sopore one way		400
Sopore return		600
Tangmarg (return)	800	750 (or 700)
Veri N��g (return)	1400	1350
Wular Lake return		1300
Yusmarg (return)	1100	1250
Yusmarg and T��rar-e-Sharief (return)		1045

\*Sometimes there is a discount on the full-taxi fare for Jamm  .

\*\*Night halt: Rs.100 per night in the case of Pahalg  m and most other places as well.

^The return fare to Kargil could be as low as Rs.5000.

A full taxi means 5 passengers in the case of Ambassadors going almost anywhere. Sumos going to Kargil seat 7 passengers.

*Tourist buses:* During the tourist season, you can get comfortable, mid-market coaches for Gulmarg, Pahalg  m, Sonamarg and even Leh/ Kargil from the stand next to the TRC.

*Packages:* The Tour and Travel Division of the JKTDC offers 'packages' that cover everything from arrival at the airport to departure, and accommodation, meals and sightseeing in between. Outside the state the JKTDC's offices are the same as those of J&K Tourism. In Srinagar and Jammu its offices are in the TRC.

Srinagar: Ph. 2456670, 2457930, 2472644. Fax: 2457927, 2476107.

Jammu: Ph. 2549065. Fax: 2546412.

The JKTDC's 'packages' include: i) 'Golden Triangle' (US \$290 per head): 8 days/ 7 nights in Kashmir (Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalg  m and Sonamarg); ii) 'Kashmir-Lad  kh' (US \$295 per person; each group must consist of at least 4 persons) 8 days/ 7 nights (Arrive Srinagar, see Gulmarg and Kargil, and depart from Leh.); iii) 'Skiing in Gulmarg' There are packages ranging from Rs.2,999 per head for 6 nights to Rs.9,999 per head for 29 nights. Each group must have 6 to 12 members; iv) Sri Amarn  thji Y  tr  : Jammu-Pahalg  m-the Y  tr  -Pahalg  m-Jammu-Mansar-Jammu. 8 days/7 nights. Rs.4,999 or Rs.5,999 per person, depending on type of coach used (a/c or deluxe). The group must consist of at least 8 persons. Pony charges are not included; v) Honeymoon package: 6 days/ 5 nights: Rs.8,599 per head ex-Jammu; Rs.6,999 ex-Srinagar; vi) Kashmir special: 11 days/ 10 nights. Rs.4,999 per head, ex-Jammu (European plan). (All rates are indicative.)



Most 'packages' include reception (and send-off) at the airport, accommodation on twin sharing basis, meals, local transport and sightseeing. In case you are put up in a 'hut' rather than hotel, there would still be two persons per bedroom. Thus there would be twice as many persons in a hut as there are bedrooms. In some economy packages there might be as many as 4 persons per room. Children under 12 get a 50% discount. Some packages require groups to consist of a certain minimum number of persons. The JKTDC wants reservations to be confirmed 20 days in advance in some cases and 30 days in others.

### Access

**Air:** Srinagar is served by Indian Airlines and Jet Airways. Some of their daily Delhi-Srinagar flights halt at Jammu, too. The information has been updated to January 2004. However, it is only indicative and subject to change.

### Flight Schedules:

	From	To	Days	Dep.	Arr.
IA	Delhi	Jammu	daily	11:40	12:45
IA	Jammu	Srinagar	daily	13:30	14:05
IA	Srinagar	Jammu	daily	13:10	13:45
IA	Jammu	Delhi	daily	15:05	16:15
IA	Delhi	Srinagar		10:30	11:40
IA	Srinagar	Delhi		14:40	15:50
IA	Leh	Srinagar	Sundays	08:05	08:40
IA	Srinagar	Leh	Sundays	09:30	10:05
Jet A	Delhi	Jammu	daily	12:00	13:10
Jet A	Jammu	Srinagar	daily	13:45	14:20
Jet A	Srinagar	Delhi	daily	15:10	16:30
Jet A	Delhi	Srinagar	daily	11:15	12:35
Jet A	Srinagar	Jammu	daily	13:30	14:05
Jet A	Jammu	Delhi	daily	14:40	15:55

In the summers, in case there is a rush of tourists, Indian Airlines operates additional flights as well.

**Helicopters:** It might be possible to book the State Helicopter for around Rs.40,000 (not including waiting charges) for a return journey to almost any part of Kashmir Valley (e.g. Gulmarg, Pahalgâm, Sri Amarnâth ji,



Gurez or Tangdar). The fare to Kargil and Leh is higher. The helicopter seats 5 passengers. So, essentially the fare is Rs.2,000 per passenger each way to some places and Rs.2,400 to others. However, only full bookings for round (return) trips are accepted.

Film crews have to pay Rs.40,000 for every hour of flying time. Payments are accepted only in the form of crossed bank drafts. In case the helicopter sortie gets cancelled (which happens off and on) the draft is returned to the passenger.

At the time of publication, this facility was available only for missions of mercy and for officials. However, the government is considering extending the service to all tourists.

Contact the office of the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir (telefax: 2452558).

Telephone nos.

Indian Airlines, TRC, Srinagar: 2452328, 2450257

Airport: 2430334, 2431696

Jet Airways, Ansari Motors, near Burn Hall, Sonwar, Srinagar: 2475511, 2475533.

Airport: 2433007, 2433035. Fax: 2434385.

*On getting there:*

Foreigners are required to fill in a form, which they are given as soon as they enter the Arrival Lounge at Srinagar. The lounge has a mini-tourist reception centre. There is an office of J&K Tourism (phone: 2430635), as well as counters manned by representatives of houseboat, shikârâ (boat) and hotel owners for tourists to make reservations.

The airport is in Budgâm district, and around 14 km. from the centre of the city. However, the outer limits of Srinagar City begin just two kilometres from the airport. In addition to taxis, there normally is a bus from the airport to the city (Tourist Reception Centre). The bus charges Rs.25 per passenger.

*Rail:* The nearest railway station is in Jammu, 300 km. away. There are as many as twenty trains from various parts of India to Jammu. You can either fly from Jammu to Srinagar or travel by road.

*Road:* You can travel by road to Srinagar from Jammu or Leh. The road from Leh is closed because of snow from roughly the 15<sup>th</sup> November to the beginning of June. The road from Jammu is meant to be open throughout the year. However, heavy snowfall or landslides caused by heavy rains sometimes block the road for two or three days at a time.

There are buses from both Jammu and Leh to Srinagar. However, the most popular way of travelling between Srinagar and Jammu (and Srinagar



and Katra) is by 'Tata Sumo' mini-buses. You can get them at the Jammu railway station or bus terminus. They function more or less as taxis. If your group isn't big enough to fill a 'Tata Sumo', you can either team up with another group, or pay the difference. Most tourists hire Tata Sumos for the return journey, as well as sightseeing within Kashmir.

**Food:** Kashmir is famous for its multi-course Wazwan. On average there are different 21 mutton dishes and half a dozen chutneys in this sit-down feast. More than a kilo and a half (three pounds) of mutton and chicken will be placed on your plate, whether you eat it all or not. Even scaled-down versions have 11 mutton courses. Elaborate wazwans, on the other hand, could serve as much as two kilograms of meat to every guest, in, maybe, 30 dishes.

The *Wazwan* restaurant at the TRC is supposed to serve a scaled-down version: fewer dishes and smaller portions. However, do intimate its management in advance that you want a *trâmi* (the plate the wazwan is served in) before landing up. Standards are not what they were before 1989, but still are among the best in town and the full (or even scaled-down) Wazwan is not always available. Besides, the restaurant is not always open. (See also the chapter on 'Wazwan'.)

The Welcome Hotel has a surprisingly good mini-trâmi.

Standard, Lâl Chowk, is a first floor eatery, not at all fashionable or slick. Prices are middling, not low. However, it serves among the best individual Kashmiri dishes in town.

For Chinese food, Lhasa, just off the Boulevard, is easily the best choice. Tibetans run it.

Nun Kun, a public sector restaurant on the Boulevard, just beyond the Nehru Park (island), has great ambience. The food is good, but the servings so small that it works out far more expensive than Lhasa.

**Confectionery:** Kashmir (like Tibet and Ladâkh) does not have its own sweets or deserts. Therefore, it has taken to Western confectionery like no other part of South Asia has. Kashmir doesn't have the kind of variety you get in, say, Delhi or Mumbai. But prices are among the lowest in India. Almost all the bakeries of Kashmir, including those in the small towns and villages, give you value for money.

The best, without doubt, is Jee Enn (ph. 478628), on MA (Maulana Azad) Road, close to Broadway Hotel. Glocken (in a little lane at Dal Gate), run by the (East) German wife of a Kashmiri, used to serve incredible cheese-and walnut-cake. However, somehow Glocken hasn't been its old self of late. Since the late 1990s, Moonlight Bakers, University Road, Hazratbal (ph. 2428484), has made the best walnut cake ('tath piece'). Jan Bakers (at the MA Road/ Dal gate tri-junction) and Mughal Darbar (Residency Road) are fairly good, too.



**Alcohol:** As of today alcohol is served only at the Grand Palace and Broadway. Only one shop in town sells liquor.

**Timings:** Restaurants close early, unless there is custom. If there is a boom in tourist arrivals, as there was till May 1999, restaurants will accept orders till around 10 or 10.15 pm. If there is a slump, they close as early as 9 pm. The Nun Kun starts winding up as early as 8 pm. So do restaurants that cater to local people and not tourists.

As of today credit cards are not accepted in Kashmir. The two luxury hotels (Broadway and Grand Palace) make an exception, though.

### ***Gulmarg: Where to stay and other essential information***

**Population:** Gulmarg has no resident population.

**Languages spoken:** Kashmiri, Urdu, Gojri.

**Medical facilities:** There is a Government Hospital (ph. 254441) in Gulmarg. Better facilities exist at nearby Tangmarg.

**Telephone (STD) code:** 01954 from everywhere; 951954 from most parts of the state.

**Religions:** All nearby villages are entirely Muslim. There is a church, a temple, a Gurûdwara and a mosque in Gulmarg.

**Location:** (8,700 feet/ 2,730m.) Gulmarg is 57 km. from Srinagar.

**Attractions:** See the chapter on 'Gulmarg.'

**Where to stay:** i) There are almost a dozen private hotels in Gulmarg. Lower income Indian tourists generally tend to avoid spending the night at Gulmarg. ii) Self-catering huts: The public-sector J&K TDC lets out one, two-and three-bedroom huts, with attached kitchens. iii) The J&K TDC also rents out rooms in the Gulmarg club.

The printed tariff generally applies only for five months a year: May, June, August, September and October. The trade often gives a 25% concession during the remaining months. Sometimes tourists from within the state are offered a 50% discount during July, when schools in Kashmir close for vacations. However, during the winters you might have to pay extra for the heating.

Hotels currently in operation are as follows. (Their tariffs, as well their being open to tourists, are subject to change.)



Hotel	Telephone	DxSngl	DxDBR	Sngl	DBR	
<i>Apharwat/</i>	254519				800	
<i>Affarwat</i>	254402					
<i>City View</i>					200	
<i>Green Heights</i>	254404			900	1200	
Gulmarg Inn	254501	600	1200	500	1000	
Highlands	254430			1600	2000	Health
Park	254491					Club
	254407					
Hill Top	254445			950	1400	Health
	254477					Club
Kingsley	254415			840	1440	
	Fax 254416					
<i>Nedou's</i>	254428	2500	3000 per	1200	1500	
		per cottage	cottage			
Pine Palace	254466	2340			1825	
	254504	Suite Ap				
<i>Shanu Lodge</i>	254483					
Welcome	254412			850	950	
Yimberzal	254447			500	800	
Zum Zum	254465				350	

DBR: Double bedroom. Sngl: Single occupancy. Dx= deluxe. In addition, the hotels levy a 10% service charge, and government taxes.

The information in the above chart has been updated to January 2004, except that which is in italics.

There also are rooms for hire at the Gulmarg Club. The public sector J&K TDC (ph. 254507) has several self-catering 'huts' for hire. These have a living-dining room and kitchen, in addition to one to four bedrooms and toilets. Kitchen utensils, crockery and cutlery are included in the rent. All rates are EP. Huts with 4 bedrooms: Rs.2000; Huts with 2 bedrooms: Rs.1500; Huts with one bedroom: Rs.800. There's a 4% tax on the above mentioned tariff for all 'huts'.

**Food:** There are no celebrated restaurants in Gulmarg. In fact, outside the hotels there are only the wayside eateries. Most people eat at their own hotel, or, more often, cook their own food.



**Tourist Information Centre:** There is a J&K Govt. Tourist Office in the Club Building, Gulmarg. Ph. 254439, 254487.

***Pahalg  m: where to stay and other essential information***

**Population:** The town has a tiny resident population. Pahalg  m had 2,626 residents in 1981, and 5,922 in 2001. The rest move in or out according to the weather: and depending on how good or bad tourist arrivals are.

**Languages spoken:** Kashmiri, Urdu

**Medical facilities:** A government medical officer (ph. 23232) is permanently stationed at Pahalg  m.

**Telephone (STD) code:** 951936 (from within the valley); 01936 from elsewhere.

**Religions:** Isl  m is the religion of almost everyone who lives in or around Pahalg  m. However, there is a major gur  dwara in town, plus ancient temples and Muslim shrines nearby.

**Location:** Pahalg  m is 96 km. from Srinagar and 45 km. from   na  tn  g. It is located on the banks of the Lidder river, at its junction with the Shesh N  g. This tiny town is at elevations between 7,200' and 8,500' (2,130m. and above).

**What to do:** See the chapter on 'Pahalg  m.'

**Where to stay: i) Hotels:**

Hotels functioning in the year 2004 include:

**The Upper end**

Name	Ph.	StAP	StEP	DxAP	DxEP	DbAP	DbEP	SBR	e-mail
Heevan	243119	3000		2000			1500		
Mansion	243354		1300				1200		
	243356?								
Mount view	2433221		2900	2800	1900				
	F243321								
Natraj	243218?		1000		800		700		
	243225								
Pahalgam	243254?		2500				2000	1500	
	243252								
	F243267								
Woodstock	243259		3600		2500		1500	1000	

Contd.



Contd.

## Category B

Name	Ph.	StAP	StEP	DxAP	DxEP	DbAP	DbEP	SBR
Hill Park	243286							
Pine View	243357	700	600		1000		700	
Shepherds	243274						400	

## Category C

Name	Ph.	StAP	StEP	DxAP	DxEP	DbAP	DbEP	SBR
Brown Palace	243255		800				400	200
Ice Rock	243280						600	300
Raj Palace	243276		1000				800	
Taj Mahal	243261?		850				600	
	243361							
Volga	243292						400	
	243293?							
White House	243291						400	

## Category D

Name	Ph.	StAP	StEP	DxAP	DxEP	DbAP	DbEP	SBR
Grand View	243273						600	

## Category not known

Noor Mahal	243227
Pine Peak	243304
Lidder Palace	243237
Raj Mahal	243261?
Metro	243082
Paradise	243251
Regent	243324
Plaza	243278
Centre Hotel	243346
Khalsa Janta	243234
New India	243365
Greenland	323087
Hill Park	243268
Maharaja Palace	-
Alpine	243211



Service charges: 10% extra. The tariffs of the hotels Woodstock, Pahalg  m and Mountview are accurate to July 2003. They charge between Rs.300 and Rs.700 for additional persons staying in the same room (EP). On AP, Mountview charges Rs.1200 for additional persons.

The tariffs of the other hotels are approximate and only indicative. They are likely to be 25% higher by the time this book is out. On the other hand, depending on the time of the year and how good the season has been, you can get a discount of up to 50% on the printed tariff. The hotel association emphasised this even during a booming season.

However, the telephone numbers of all hotels are accurate to mid 2003.

In the case of some telephone numbers I have put a '?.' This indicates that the number given to me by the hotel association of Pahalg  m is different from my own notes.

**F'** means 'fax.'

Ph. means 'phone number'; St= Suite; Dx= deluxe room; Db= double bedroom; SBR= single bedroom; AP= American Plan; EP= European Plan. All rates given above are in Indian rupees.

(All tariffs, as well as whether the hotels mentioned are actually open to tourists, are both subject to change.)

All the hotels mentioned have attached restaurants. Both the Pahalg  m Hotel and Woodstock have conference rooms. Heevan alone admits to having a bar. All 6 hotels of the upper end, as well as Raj Palace and Grand View, have cable TV. The hotels of the upper end have telephones in rooms.

ii) The (public-sector) *Tourist Bungalow*. Has a huge garden attached to it (and a roaring river next door). At Rs.300 for a double bedroom it is much cheaper than private hotels of that class.

iii) Guidebooks will tell you that there are two (government-run) *dormitories*. There *were*, would be more correct. They were damaged during the 1990s.

iv) (*Self catering*) Huts: There are one-and two-bedroom holiday huts, with attached kitchens, run by the public sector Jammu & Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC). Very good value for money. Huts with one bedroom (two beds): Rs.800 a day; huts with two bedrooms (4 beds): Rs.1500 a day.

v) *Guest Houses*: There are also around 25 guesthouses in Pahalg  m. They have between two and five rooms each and charge between Rs.300 and Rs.800 for a double room.

vi) *Camping Site*: Rajavas, a wooded plateau with a view of the valley, is the best place to pitch your tents at.



By and large the trade charges the full printed rate only in May, June, August, September and October. There is a 25% off-season discount during the other months. In July, when schools in Kashmir close for vacations, sometimes the JKTDC gives a 50% discount to visitors from within the state. If there aren't enough bookings, the hotels simply shut down in winter.

The J&KTDC runs the Tourist Bungalow as well as the 'huts'. Its phone numbers are 243308 and 243285 in Pahalgâm. Or you can contact their Manager, Reservations (Tours and Travel Division), Tourist Reception Centre, Srinagar, phones: 2472644, 2476107.

**Food:** There are no celebrated restaurants in Pahalgâm. Most visitors dine at their hotel or cook their own food (if in a self-catering hut). There are several inexpensive eating places in the main market. They mainly serve north Indian food. However, some of them try to cater to Gujarâti and South Indian tastes, too.

**Tourist Information Centre:** The Tourist Office of the J&K Government is prominently located in the main market. In fact, it is the first building that you are likely to see when your vehicle stops at the drop gate to pay a small toll.

**Business Centre listings:** There is no formal business centre in Pahalgâm. Pahalgâm Hotel and Hotel Woodstock have conference rooms, though. However, in the main market, and elsewhere, there are several PCOs from which you can make trunk (long distance) calls and send faxes. During the Amarnâth Yâtrâ, PCOs with 'STD/ ISD' facilities, are set up at several points along the trekking route.

### Tourist Information Centres

Offices of Jammu & Kashmir Tourism are at:

**Delhi:** 210-203, Kanishka (hotel) Shopping Plaza, 19 Ashoka Road (opposite Meridien Hotel, Janpath crossing). Ph: 23345373; fax: 23367881.

jaktour@ndf.vsnl.net.in

**Mumbai (Bombay):** 25, North Wing, World Trade Centre, Cuffe Parade, Colaba. Ph: 22189040. Fax: 22186172.

jaktour2@bol.net.in

**Kolkata:** 12, Chowringhee. Ph: 22285791; fax: 22281950.

**Chennai (Madras):** II Floor, 36/36-A, North Usman Road. Telefax: 28235958.

jaktour1@nd4.vsnl.net.in

**Ahmedabad:** Airlines House, Lâl Darwaza. Telefax: 25503551.

**Hyderabad:** 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Left Wing, Chandra Vihar Complex, MJ Road. Telefax: 24734806.







## Glossary and Notes

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We have tried to explain all local expressions in the main text itself. The ones used most frequently have been listed below. In case some unfamiliar word or abbreviation has been left out, could you please try referring to the index.

*-bal*: 'Bal' is a Kashmîri word that means: 'a place near the banks of a river or lake.' It also means 'lake.'

*chowk*: Crossroads. The point where roads meet. Also, sometimes, the village or town square.

*gurudwârâ*: Sikh temple.

*HP*: Himâchal Pradêsh, the mountainous state that neighbours the Jammû and Ladâkh regions to the east and south.

*jeepable road*: A track on which only rugged sports-utility vehicles can ply.

*kol, kuhl*: water channel,

*galî, gallâ, lâ*: These are, respectively, the Urdû, Dogri and Ladâkhi words for 'mountain pass.'

*J&K*: Jammû and Kashmîr; the name of the state that Kashmîr is a part of.

*ling/ lingam*: A stone shaped like a phallic symbol, found in most Shiva temples.

*LoC*: Pâkistân has illegally occupied 35.15% of the state of Jammû and Kashmîr. India actually administers 45.62% of the state. (China is in the illegal occupation of the rest.) A 'Line of Control' separates the portion actually administered by India from the portion illegally occupied by Pâkistân. It is not an 'international border' (IB) because neither side accepts it as one. It serves the same purpose as a border but lacks the legal status of one.

*mandir*: Hiñdû temple.

*masjid*: Mosque.



*motorable road*: 'Motorable' means that in theory a car (or bus) can drive on that road. In practice most 'motorable' roads are only 'jeepable.' A 'motorable stretch' (or motorable distance) is one on which you can travel in a vehicle. You don't have to walk on that stretch, except for the exercise.

*-nâg*: Spring.

*nallâh*: Stream.

*pass(es)/ mountain passes*: What is a pass? A pass, more precisely a mountain pass, is a gap between two mountains. It is the highest point on a segment of a mountain road. There might be more than one passes on a road, and the next pass might be higher still.

There always are mountains on the right and left of a pass. These mountains are much higher than the pass. The job of a pass is to help you cross from the place behind you to the place in front, without having to climb all the way to the top of the mountains on the sides. A pass is called a *galli* in Urdu/ Kashmiri, a *galla* in Dogri and *la* in Ladâkhi.

*pbuh*: Peace be upon him. This is an expression that is written (or spoken) after the name of Prophet Muhammad, whenever the name is written (or spoken).

*POK* (Pâkistân Occupied Kashmîr): These are areas of Jammû & Kashmîr that are under Pâkistân's illegal occupation. Pâkistân has divided these areas into three: i) *AJK* (Âzâd Jammû & Kashmîr): This is a narrow strip that begins in Jammû district and goes through Poonch district to Muzaffarâbâd. ii) The Northern Areas ('Shumâli Ilâqâjât'): This mostly consists of the occupied areas of Ladâkh. iii) The Shaks-gâm area of present day Leh district that Pâkistân has carved out of the state and gifted to China. Because this particular segment is now with China, it (along with Aksai Chin) is referred to as *COK* (China occupied Kashmîr).

*-pura/ -porâ/ -pur/ -pore*: A suffix that means '-town,' as in 'Bridgetown' and 'Cape Town.'

*RA*: Rehmatullâh Alêhî, a invocation of the blessings of God. It is normally written or spoken after the names of saints and other good Muslims.

*roadhead*: A 'roadhead' is the last point to which you can drive up in a vehicle. There are no 'motorable' or 'jeepable' roads beyond this point. (On the return trek, this is the point where the motorable road begins.)

*-sar*: The Hindi-Sanskrit-Kashmîrî word for 'lake'.

*sarai/ serai*: A rest house, as in caravanserai.

*shaligrâm*: A little stone, often a large pebble, which represents a Hindu deity. *Shaligrâms* are rarely found alone or even in small numbers. Normally they are arranged by the hundred, if not by the thousand, in neat rows. Each *shaligrâm* represents a different deity.



*Syeds, the:* Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, had only one surviving child, Hazrat Fatima, his daughter. She married Hazrat Ali, who went on to become the Fourth Righteous Caliph of Islām. The descendants of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), through Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Fatima are known as Syeds.

*TRC* is the most important abbreviation to remember. It stands for 'Tourist Reception Centre.' In Srinagar in particular all tourist activities revolve around or begin at the TRC. (See the chapter on 'Srinagar' for more about these activities.) Jammû has an equally elaborate TRC. Leh, Katrâ and other major destinations have TRCs but most of them confine themselves to providing information and, often, renting out sports equipment. Which is to say that most TRCs (other than Srinagar and Jammû) do not have residential rooms for tourists.

*trekker:* A trekker is someone who treks.

*UP:* Uttar Pradesh (a central Indian state; India's largest).

*urs:* This is something like a Catholic Saints' Day. It is a religious occasion held at shrines, and is marked by prayer. At most shrines the *urs* is held once a year: often on the death anniversary of the saint. At some shrines (notably that of Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti at Ajmer Sharief, Râjasthân) it is held twice a year. The Islâmic calender (Hijri) is lunar. Therefore, the dates of annual events shift every year. However, in many parts of South Asia (including Kashmîr) *urses* are observed according to solar calendars, normally the one used by the local Hindu community as well. *Urs*, incidentally, is a singular.

*Valley* with a capital V: The Valley of Kashmîr. All other valleys have normally been spelt with a small 'v' in this three-volume book.

*yatra:* 'Yatra' literally means 'trip' or 'journey.' There are several important Hindu shrines in the Himâlayas, especially in J&K, HP and the UP hills. Devotees normally trek up to the shrine once a year on a designated day (or set of days). These yatras normally take place in summer, because in winter it would be difficult to reach the concerned shrine because of the snow. In a religious context, *yatra* means 'pilgrimage'.

These *yatras* have a fixed starting point, normally a temple at the bottom of that hill. Devotees gather there and then trek up to the shrine in a longish procession. Most yatras terminate at the hilltop shrine where, often, a colourful fair is held. Yatris (pilgrims) return to their homes in the plains or foothills not in a procession but when they please.

Pilgrimages in the hills are normally connected with Lord Shiv or the Mother Goddess Durgâ (in one of her several manifestations). Lord Shiv's wife, the goddess Pârvatî, is one of Durgâ Mata's best-known incarnations. Yet, some of the Mata's major forms (especially that Sî Mata Vaishno Devi ji and Ragnya Devi) are connected with the story of Sî Ram.



*ziyarat*: In most Islâmic lands this is a word that, in combination with another word, becomes a verb that means 'to go on a pilgrimage.' However, in Kashmir it means 'Islâmic shrine.'

*Administrative units: Districts, provinces, blocks, etc.*

In this book, blocks and tehsils have been mentioned only where needed to tell the reader where a particular place is located. To avoid confusing the reader, the expressions 'region' and 'sub-division' have been used as in plain English, and not in their Indian legal sense.

**District:** India is divided into around thirty states. Each state is divided into districts. The state of Jammû and Kashmir has 14 districts.

**Tehsil:** For the purposes of land revenue and law and order administration, each district is further divided into a number of tehsils (called taluka in some states).

**Block:** For the purposes of rural development, each district is divided into several 'blocks'. Some blocks have the same name and headquarters as tehsils. Their territories are 'coterminous' to some extent. However, normally there are one and a half times as many blocks in a district as there are tehsils.

**Pargana:** Akbar divided Kashmir into 34 parganas. There are few people alive in Kashmir who are aware of this fact, or even of the concept of a pargana. Fewer still can name the 34. And yet these Mughal administrative units do sometimes give a group of villages an identity. The concept of parganas seems to be current only in states like West Bengal.

**Names like Jammû, Srinagar, Leh etc.:** Jammû is the name of a town (popn: around 0.9 million), which is located in Jammû district (popn. 1.5 million, including the population of the town). Jammû district has 9 towns, including Jammû town, and 1192 villages. Then there is Jammû province, which consists of six districts (popn: 4.3 million), including Jammû district. Jammû town is the headquarters of Jammû district and province. (It is also the headquarters of Jammû tehsil. The district has 5 tehsils.)

*All districts of Jammû and Kashmir have a headquarters (i.e. 'capital') of the same name. Also, all districts in the state have a tehsil of the same name as the district.*

However, this rule does not apply to regions that have identities (geographical and cultural) going back several hundred years. Thus, 'Kashmîr' and 'Ladâkh,' do not have capital cities (or even tehsils or districts) called Kashmir or Ladâkh. Nor is there a village or town called 'Nubra' or 'Zâñskâr'. That's because Nubra and Zâñskâr have been distinct regions for centuries now. (On the other hand what is now called the Jammû region wasn't always called that.)



Srinagar is the headquarters of Kashmîr region, Valley and province. Leh has traditionally been the capital of Ladâkh district. However, now that the district has been split into two (Leh and Kargil), Leh town shares the honours with Kargil town.

The state of Jammû and Kashmîr consists of three distinct geographical *regions*, namely, Jammû, Kashmîr and Ladâkh. Regions have been determined by nature, and are not administrative zones. Officially the state consists of two *provinces* Kashmîr (which includes Ladâkh) and Jammû. To distinguish Kashmîr, the region, from Kashmîr, the province, we often use the expression 'Kashmîr Valley' or 'the Valley of Kashmîr'. Since most people know that Ladâkh is not in Kashmîr Valley, confusion is thus avoided. In this book we have capitalised the 'v' in 'Valley' only when it refers to the main Kashmîr Valley, and not the innumerable other valleys, some small, others medium-sized, of the state. Kashmîr, the province, consists of eight districts (six in the Valley and two in Ladâkh). Kashmîr, the region/ Valley, has six districts.

Thus, Kashmîr the region is not the same as Kashmîr, the province. Jammû is. Ladâkh is a distinct region. But as of today there is no administrative unit called Ladâkh.

Just thought that you might want to know.







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